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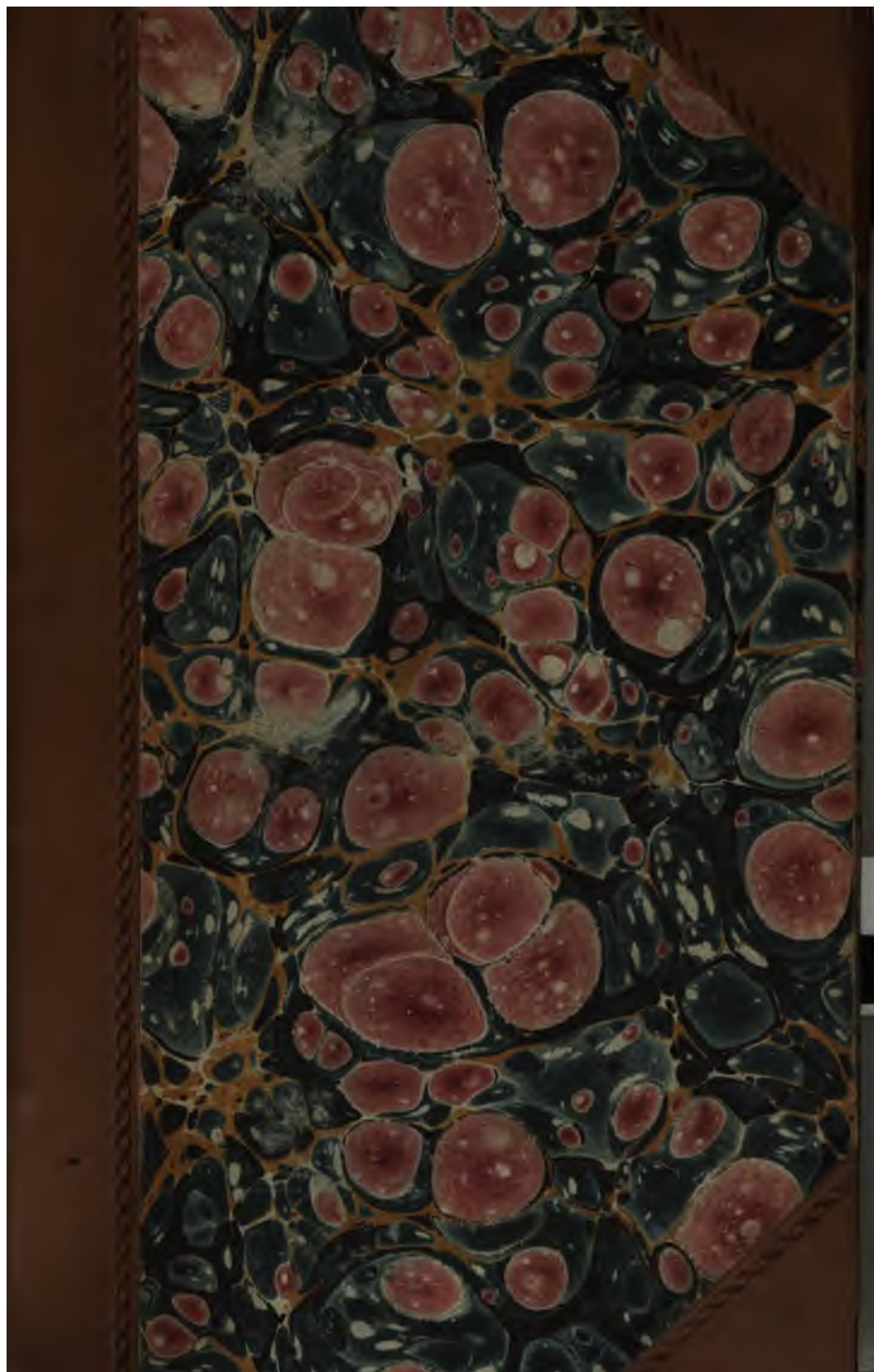
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A
DISCOURSE,
&c. &c.

S.H. 1030

A

DISCOURSE
ON THE
AUTHENTICITY AND DIVINE ORIGIN
OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT,
WITH NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS;
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF
J. E. CELLÉRIER,
Formerly Pastor and Professor of Hebrew, now Professor of Sacred Criticism
and Antiquities in the University of Geneva.
BY THE
REV. JOHN REYNELL WREFORD.

LONDON:
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

I was induced to undertake the following Translation, from a conviction that it was adapted to supply an absolute *desideratum* in the Theological Literature of our country. The work in the original is now out of print, and I am informed by the Author, that, (for very satisfactory reasons, which will hereafter appear,) he has no intention of publishing another edition. The knowledge of this circumstance may probably tend to enhance the value of the present Translation. I have added a very few notes, which I thought were necessary to elucidate the writer's statements; more would have been unnecessary, and would have deprived the work of one of its great recommendations, that of conciseness. I shall be happy if my humble labours are the means of extending the circulation of a Treatise which, both in this country and on the continent, has,

vi. **TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.**

deservedly, received high praise, and of thus contributing to aid the grand cause of Truth and Righteousness.

Professor Cell  rier has recently published a similar work on the subject of the New Testament, which seems to be a natural and highly valuable sequel to that on the Old Testament. Of this also I hope to present the public with an English Translation.

Birmingham, September 1, 1830.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

Ever since the Reformation, the church of Geneva has devoted a course of Historical Discourses, which are delivered on a particular day of the week, to the elucidation and illustration of all the facts, both of the Old and New Testament. The discourses with which both these great series open, usually serve as an introduction to the exercises which follow. In connexion with the first verses of the sacred volumes, it is customary to treat of their authenticity, integrity and credibility. This task is generally intrusted to one of the Theological Professors, and most frequently to the Professor of Sacred Criticism. In this capacity I was called upon to undertake it, and the *Venerable Association of Pastors*, who were desirous of appointing me to this office, subsequently requested me to publish my Discourse. I have endeavoured to subjoin some illustra-

tions, without which, a sermon, not exceeding three quarters of an hour in its delivery, on a subject of this nature, would have been to very little purpose. In treating upon a subject so extensive, which has been so amply considered, and which is, nevertheless, to some men's minds so new, I have endeavoured to select what was most useful, what had been least frequently discussed, and especially what I thought was most likely to interest persons of enlightened piety. I have not then pretended to write either a work of learning or of originality, but to unfold a brief statement of certain ideas and certain facts, calculated possibly to strengthen our faith, and to lead men to study the Bible with greater reverence and trust. I now give to the public my views of the Old Testament; I shall endeavour to do the same in respect of the New Testament also, if it is thought that this, my first attempt, fulfils its promise, and if God deigns to bestow his blessing, and to afford me the necessary assistance. I am happy in the opportunity with which I am now furnished, of testifying my respect for my colleagues, my brethren in Jesus Christ, who are entitled to my high esteem; and of acknowledging their kind indulgence, to which I am so deeply indebted.

I am especially happy that I have it in my power still to contribute to the edification of our church of Geneva, to which I am so ardently attached; and to which, though Providence has decreed that I shall no longer preach the word of life, I shall be always a *debtor* (Romans i. 14.), and my heart will be ever devoted.

Geneva, July 18, 1826.

ERRATA.

Page 60, line 9, *for people read they.*

— 84, 85, Notes, *for Maltebrun read Malte-Brun.*

—119, line 5, *for Cailliaud read Caillaud.*

—150, — 16, *for Yeate read Yeates.*

—216, Note, line 5, *for were read was.*

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A
DISCOURSE,

&c. &c.

GENESIS I. 1.

**IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE
HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.**

THE world springing out of nothing—
thousands of creatures called into being
and to happiness—the voice of God
peopling the solitudes of space: such,
my brethren, is the interesting and sublime
spectacle which the text presents to your
notice. In contemplating this universe
suddenly issuing from the bosom of
chaos, resplendent with grandeur and
beauty, the mind of man is awed; his
heart is stirred within him; and he feels
irresistibly impelled to prostrate himself
before its author.

B

But it is in another point of view, my brethren, that we are this day to consider these words. They are the first words of the Old Testament. They form the vestibule of that majestic edifice, which, surviving the ravages of time, has preserved to our own days the deposit of the first revelation. In the Discourses to which mine is preliminary,* the simple and sublime narratives contained in this Book, will be illustrated. The task has been entrusted to me, of preparing you for it, by refreshing your recollections of its authenticity, its sanctity, its divine origin: a task not easily discharged, when you consider how limited is my time, and how little adapted is my subject to the pulpit. Nevertheless, let me attempt it. Let me, at least, trace out in its leading features, an imperfect sketch of the vast picture, which it will not be in my power to present, in all its details, to your con-

* See the Preface.

templation. Let us especially, implore God, who condescended to call himself *the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob*, to direct our meditations, and to give glory to his word. Amen.

I.—AUTHENTICITY AND CREDIBILITY OF THE
BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Authenticity.—When, and by whom, were the books of the Old Law written? Are they really the works of those to whom we ascribe them? In a word, are they authentic? With this fundamental question, it is necessary to begin.

For the purpose of studying these books, I go back to the time when the dialect in which they are written, was the living language of the Hebrews.—Passing through the different ages of Hebrew literature, I meet every where with a language already formed, notwithstanding the natural development of the art of speech—notwithstanding the influence of political revolutions, and of

progressive civilization. This fact proves to me, that in a still remoter age I shall discover a decisive epoch, when the national language received its settled form: and at last, find some important work, which has determined its character. Soon, at the source of this ancient river, I discover the *Pentateuch*, or the five books of Moses; and I recognize the period, the event, and the work, for which I sought. I study this work, and I soon perceive that it is the basis of the whole of the Old Testament—the book which all the others imitate, suppose, or explain. This book contains the history of the Jewish law, and of the events which rendered it necessary, or which were designed to prepare for it. It appears to have been written at the very time when this law had its origin. In fact, the narrative of Moses, which is concise, and even obscure, in its notice of facts long prior to the law, and having no reference to it—suddenly becomes, as it approaches this decisive period, copious

and diversified, as contemporaneous history usually is; or rather it is no longer a history, but a journal, in which laws, wars and miracles, are alternately recorded, without any other order than that of time. Every thing indicates, that the Pentateuch was not composed at a subsequent period. Indeed, against the very supposition of a later origin, so abundant is the critical, historical and literary evidence which might be adduced, that it would be idle for me to think of setting it all before you. Upon this supposition, would the Pentateuch have been written in that simple, original and rather antiquated style, by which it is distinguished from all the rest of the Old Testament? Would it have given the *original* form of that divine law, which was altered immediately after the time of Moses? Would it never have adverted to those religious customs which were introduced after him? Could the impostor have failed to betray himself in some way or another? How, indeed,

is it possible, that this strange impostor should have persuaded his countrymen to receive this book as the work of God himself; men whose interest it was to reject it; whose slow and stubborn understandings never yielded, but to the sound of thunder, and the crash of the thunderbolt?

But *when*, let me ask, could such an imposture have taken place? From Joshua to Nehemiah, this book is the foundation of the Hebrew history; the whole progress of the government supposes it—continual testimonies are borne to it: to it Joshua as well as David, Daniel as well as Isaiah, appeal. Between the schism and the captivity, a religious reformation took place in the state nearly every fifty years, founded upon the written law; which alone, in those unhappy days, was capable of struggling against the irregularities of the people and their monarchs. Jehoshaphat, Jehoiada, Hezekiah and Josiah, each in his turn, elevated it as a standard in the midst

of astonished Israel, with a view to remind them of Jehovah. If Daniel declared to the captive people that they no longer had a country, it was because this sacred banner had been forsaken.

But, once more I ask, to what age, to what author, shall we attribute this truly surprising fraud? To Ezra—I hear some timid sceptics whisper, ashamed of their miserable hypothesis, even before they propose it. Ezra! I hear certain presumptuous persons more confidently repeat, who think, by a decided tone, to supply the defect of evidence. What an astonishing man then, must this Ezra be, without being sustained by the ambition of founding an empire, to compose a master-piece like this; to form its style, to invent the language, a language so remarkable, so uniform, and especially, so different from the acknowledged writings of Ezra with which we can compare it; and to forge the whole of the Old Testament, for the whole of the Old Testament is a witness in favour

of the Pentateuch, and supposes its existence. He must then, have united the energetic simplicity of Moses with the fervour of David; the unpretending style of the historians, with the captivating pathos of Isaiah. By a single effort, his astonishing genius must have conceived both the plan of the Jewish law, and the gradual developement of the Jewish revelation; the imposing general character of their entire history, and those prophetic poems so strikingly marked by the inspiration of their authors; and all this for the purpose of deception! But he must have done still more: he must have induced his countrymen to adopt this monstrous imposture, have persuaded them that they had received this law from their fathers, that they had studied it in their childhood, and that they had been punished for violating its injunctions!

In the last century, my brethren, there appeared a man,* who after a profound

* Father Hardouin.

study of antiquity, undertook to prove, that the world was the dupe of a monstrous and extravagant imposture. In his opinion, no such men as Homer and Virgil, Cicero and Demosthenes, ever existed; Rome and Greece never conquered nor enlightened the world; the noblest productions of ancient genius are but a joke, intended to impose on posterity. All that the world has read, learned and believed, is the invention of certain Monks during the middle ages! Now, I venture to assert, that this hypothesis is of its kind, not more silly than that which asserts, that the Pentateuch is the work of Ezra.

The Pentateuch is traced then to the age of Moses. Is it still necessary to prove, that Moses, not any of his contemporaries, is its author? Is not his name inscribed on every page? Does he not himself tell us, that he records facts and laws? Does he not charge the Hebrews to preserve his narratives? Has he not, besides, left the traces of his hand in each

of the five books in question? In Genesis, I recognize the well informed traveller who collects valuable documents, as well as the founder of an empire, who encourages the descendants of Abraham to the conquest of Canaan: in Leviticus, the legislator who entrusts the deposit of his law to the priests: in Deuteronomy, the dying prophet who endeavours to make a last and durable impression upon the people. How completely does the soul of Moses display itself in this eloquent book, in which prayers, promises, threatenings, fear and hope, succeed each other, even as in the troubled bosom of a father anxious for the fate of his children!

In next considering the variety of knowledge which the arrangement of the Pentateuch required, we shall find that Moses was actually possessed of all that was necessary for the purpose. The Pentateuch implies an acquaintance with the civil, military, commercial, and religious institutions of Egypt; Moses, educated at

the Court of the Pharaohs, was instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians. The Pentateuch implies an historical acquaintance with the different Arab, Midianite, and Idumæan tribes. Moses spent forty years as a simple shepherd in the midst of these tribes: and subsequently, forty other years, with still better means and more authority, for collecting those ancient documents which the book of Genesis contains. The Pentateuch implies a knowledge of those great events by which, from the Patriarchal age, the Deity was preparing the formation of the Hebrew people; Moses was a Hebrew, a zealous Hebrew, a learned Hebrew. The Pentateuch implies an intimate knowledge of the Jewish law; Moses was the legislator. In truth, the Pentateuch is not only contemporary with Moses, it is his own work.

Here, my brethren, is a combination of presumptive arguments and direct proofs, in favour of the authenticity of the Old

Testament, calculated to enforce conviction. Are more needed? If so, there is one among those which I might yet adduce, which appears to me to amount to a complete demonstration.

On the desolate soil of Palestine, near the ruins of the ancient Samaria, there at this day dwells the nearly wasted remnant of a poor tribe.* These are the Samaritans,

* The descendants of the old Samaritans are to be found at the present time, in Palestine, at Naplous (the ancient Neapolis or Sichem) between mount Ebal and mount Gerizim. They form a miserable tribe of about thirty families, or two hundred souls. They still preserve the Pentateuch and their alphabet; they continue faithful to all they have been able to retain of their religion, and they never marry out of their own sect. In a word, they are a living monument, as singular as it is authentic, of the ancient Samaritan church, the enemy of Jerusalem, the contemporary of Ezra, and of Jesus Christ. Many learned Europeans have had some intercourse with them during the sixteenth century, and since that period. M. Sylvestre de Sacy was, I believe, the last. See his *Mémoire sur l'état actuel des Samaritains*, Paris, 1812; inserted in the 52nd Number of *Annales des Voyages*.

the last descendants of the ancient enemies of Judah: men destined to bear testimony to the old law of those Jews whom they detest, as the Jews were, in their turn, to render a continual testimony to the oracles of Christ, whom they have rejected. The Samaritan church, grafted upon that of the ten tribes at the time of the captivity of Judah, forming an uninterrupted succession from Jeroboam to the present day, acknowledges but one sacred book. That book is the Pentateuch. The Samaritans declare it to be the inspired work of Moses—the law which their ancestors received from him. They could never have borrowed this book from the Jews, who were the objects of their hatred and suspicion. They have at all times possessed it: they have inherited it from their fathers: they retain it still: they possess that book alone. They thus prove that ever since the separation of the ten tribes, it has existed and been regarded as authentic and divine. They receive only this book, because, at

the time of the schism, the other portions of the Old Testament were either not written, or not collected. Let any impartial person consider these testimonies, or rather these facts, and ask himself if it is possible for him any longer to doubt.

In proving the authenticity of the Pentateuch, my brethren, all that I have been able to do, has been to give you a general view of my ideas. Time would fail me, were I to combat objections, or fortify my proofs with those historical details which give them interest and life. I hope, however, that I have said enough to induce you to share in my own conviction. Yes, the Pentateuch is authentic; internal evidence, external testimonies, the nature of things, historical proofs, arguments of every kind are in its favour. No objection, when examined, has been found valid.

2. *Credibility*.—The Pentateuch is authentic. The narratives which it contains were written then, in the presence of eye-

witnesses of the facts recorded, in the presence of monuments designed to preserve the recollection of these facts, and at the very time when the events took place. This being once admitted, the truth of the facts recorded is demonstrated. Of what fraud indeed can an historian be suspected, who, for the benefit of the spectators or of the actors, records, as they occur, the things which they, as well as himself, have done or seen? If Moses had been an impostor, six hundred thousand witnesses could have proved him so: for their crimes and their sufferings constitute his history. If he had been an impostor, they would have detected and exposed him, for they were any thing but a credulous and tractable people; and this history was too often the record of their shame. Does Moses then show any desire to withdraw this book from their notice? Quite the reverse. He compels them to read it, and to transmit it to their descendants. They obeyed him: and most effectually

ally provided that their latest posterity should be acquainted both with their guilt and with its punishment. Will *you* doubt the truth of this accusing voice, which they dare not, which they cannot contradict?

But, besides, why should you doubt? Read, then, these books, and say whether they appear like the work of imposture. What! this natural and artless language—these simple records, in which laws and passing events are inscribed without method, and day by day. Can these be the work of falsehood? Do you not know that falsehood bears an impression not easily to be effaced? You may discover this wretched impression in the traditions of Chaldæa, of Egypt, or of India. You will there find monstrous theogonies, strangely uniting the heavens and the earth to the vilest creatures—to the most fantastic conceptions; peopling space with disgusting demi-gods, and filling time with myriads of years to gratify national vanity, or with ridiculous genealogies

Thus did they always invent, whose unbridled imaginations related at random the origin of the world, or, at least, who hesitated not to mingle their fanciful conceptions with the ill-preserved remains of early traditions. Had Moses wished to deceive the people, he would, at least, have taken care to flatter the national pride or the ill-regulated imagination of his countrymen. But what a strange impostor—what a barren inventor! The name and the age of ten patriarchs are all that his imagination can find remarkable from the time of Adam to that of Noah. In the first chapters of Genesis, what do you meet with? A few proper names—a few facts; certainly important, from the circumstance of the Deity being so immediately concerned, and from their being the instruments of such momentous consequences; but related in a few words, without affectation and without display. In the subsequent chapters, we read of petty revolutions: petty kings: trifling

incidents: inconsiderable wars: domestic or pastoral scenes, always in perfect harmony with the age in which they are placed: simple stories, which give us faithful representations of the infancy of civilization, and which enable us to follow its first steps from Abraham to Isaac, from Isaac to Moses, from Moses to David. I regret that time will not permit me to enter into those minute details, which probably may have escaped your observation, but which would not fail to carry conviction to your minds. Let the enemy of our faith, incapable of recognizing the language of truth, seek to shroud the records of Moses in darkness; his efforts will be vain. The march of truth may be slow, but it is sure, and man has not the power to arrest her progress. In proportion as the Pentateuch is better studied, and by men of more extensive learning, objections will disappear, and its evidences be seen in a clearer light. Our own age, indeed, in

consequence of the vast scientific researches which it has undertaken, and the conclusions to which it has arrived, is continually bearing fresh testimony to the accuracy of the Mosaic history. In vain has a prejudiced scepticism sought to arm science against the book of Genesis—a book which it did not understand; in vain, I will also say, have unskilful advocates weakened their cause, by the narrowness of their views and the imperfection of their reasonings. The work of Moses daily achieves some triumph; not indeed over the sciences, which are not its adversaries, but on the contrary, with their aid, over the spirit of systems, over partial knowledge and scepticism. The chronology of the Old Testament receives daily confirmation. The facts which it relates are shown to be connected with other facts. The great date of the creation of mankind, recorded in Genesis, is found still inscribed in the history of nations, as well as on the coasts of the sea, and in

the heart of mountains. The earth opening her bosom to the geologist, has compelled him there to see the order of the six days;* and the ruined monuments of ancient Egypt, at length disclosing the sense of their hieroglyphics, have borne their testimony to the historian of the Hebrews.

The Pentateuch is authentic: its narratives are true. The other books of the Old Testament, being connected with this first link, require no particular notice. Each, in its way, is one of the members of that vast edifice, of which the Pentateuch is at once the centre and the vestibule: each, too, has witnesses and proofs peculiar to itself. The majority of these books are the productions of writers with whom we are well acquainted, and

* See *Lettres de De Luc à Blumenbach. Discours préliminaire de Cuvier*, prefixed to *Recherches sur les ossemens des quadrupèdes fossiles*. See also *Thèses de M. F. Soret sur la création du monde*. Genève. 1819.

of venerable prophets: the origin of some others is still uncertain. They have all been collected by the Jews in this sacred volume, which forms the depository of the first revelation, respecting the limits of which, the Hebrews have never varied in their statements, and which has received the sanction of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. Translated, in subsequent times, into a variety of languages, and dispersed throughout the earth, this ancient compilation has nevertheless remained under the guardianship of the Jews: of those Jews, who seem destined to be in all ages the depositaries and vouchers of that sacred charter which pronounces their condemnation. Strange to relate, they watch over its integrity, and thus involuntarily befriend the Christian faith. For eighteen centuries the Jewish church, that forsaken bride, weeping as she sits under the palm-tree, has fixed her eye intently on that book. She exhibits it alike to those who demand

of her the titles of her ancient glory, the foundation of her hopes, and the sentence which has decreed her ruin. She is ever at hand to demonstrate the origin and the faithful preservation of these remarkable pages, which no revolutions, no time, can obliterate; of that venerable volume which she has called **THE BIBLE**, that is, by way of eminence, **THE BOOK**.

II.—DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

1. *Direct Proofs*.—The Old Testament is authentic—the records of the Old Testament are faithful—the Old Testament is credible. With these admissions, do you perceive, my brethren, their inevitable consequences? If the Old Testament is credible, it contains a revelation—it is a divine book. In every page you will find the formal declaration, that its several authors have been guided by the Spirit of God. You will find numerous miracles, inseparably connected with the history,

offered in proof of that divine inspiration to which these books lay claim. As soon as we perceive this, our ideas are elevated, and in these ancient writings we at once recognize the work of God. If we examine them from this new point of view, and endeavour to discover traces of their Divine Author, then, notwithstanding the obscurities which abound in them, and which are the natural consequences, both of their antiquity and the ignorance of the people for whom alone they were originally intended, we shall discover other miracles, not less calculated to produce conviction, than the prodigies performed by the rod of Moses or the voice of Elisha. Would that I might be allowed to point out, at least, a few of these striking circumstances, which escape our notice in a slight and inattentive perusal of the Holy Writings.

Do you see that dull people, despised by the human race, pertinaciously confining themselves to a small spot of

the earth? But little advanced in civilization, they make no pretensions either to literary or scientific fame: they boast no celebrated philosophers—no distinguished artists. They are strangers to that intellectual progress which is in their neighbourhood, and which distinguishes the people of Greece and of the East. Their language is poor; their ignorance extreme; their mental powers are undeveloped and inactive. The resemblance which they bear to other nations is not unlike that which those mis-shapen beings bear to the human race, who, on account of the imperfection of their faculties, are condemned to vegetate in a long infancy. With one thing, however, one single thing, they, and they alone, are acquainted. The knowledge of it was denied to the wisdom of the Greeks and the pride of the Orientals: it is no less than the eternal and supreme existence of the only God, who, *in the beginning created the heavens and the earth.* They

alone speak of the Deity in a manner worthy of his grandeur: the rest of mankind are ignorant of the true God. While in other countries, men of immortal genius, capable of celebrating the glory of the Most High, insult him by their unworthy conceptions; while certain sages *feel after him to find him*, and rejoice, at most, in the glimmering of some faint and doubtful ray, the Jewish people worship the only God, before whom men may bow without a blush. The Jewish people, of all people the dullest and most ignorant; who learned from the nations which surrounded them only lessons of idolatry; who spent two centuries of slavery in Egypt,—that Egypt, whose gods, to use the language of the poet, dwelt in stables and grew in gardens—were the only people acquainted with the most sublime, important, and abstract of all truths! Did they discover it by chance? Were they indebted for it to their own sagacity? Absurd suppositions! which the slightest examination

overthrows. Rather hear them when they tell you—*God spake to our fathers*, God made himself known to Israel; and you, my brethren, do you prostrate yourselves before that Supreme Being, who has manifested himself to you, as it were, face to face, in the work of revelation, as well as in that of nature.

Let us consider now, not the religion of the Jews, but those who were instrumental in making it known,—Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and others who gloriously followed in their footsteps. Remark their disinterestedness—their self-oblivion. *They were stoned*, says St. Paul; *they were sawn asunder; they wandered about, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts and in mountains*. But wherefore did they expose themselves to so many evils? I regard them as the ambassadors of God; and this appears to me to offer abundant explanation of their conduct. But do you, ye learned sceptics, solve for

us this problem, and others which their lives present? Tell us, for instance, who was Moses, the founder of the most remarkable law which ever existed. He was a man of intrepidity and lofty genius, you reply. But in the simple history which he has himself written, have you not read of his procrastination, his indecision, his timidity? Have you not heard him accuse himself, in the face of his army, of weakness and hesitation—declare himself guilty and abandoned of God, in the presence of his soldiers? Is it in these circumstances that you recognize the genius of the legislator and the courage of the conqueror? Tell us, too, why this aged man, after he had reached his eightieth year, kept his people, for forty years, captive in a parched and barren wilderness, instead of entering into that land of promise, whither all their wishes led them. Explain to us, at least, the personal interest which he consulted; the secret motives by which he was actu-

ated; the share of glory and of wealth which he reserved for his children, as well as for himself. His office he leaves to a stranger; his own children he places in the obscure ranks of the Levites. If Moses was not, in all respects, the immediate and faithful agent of the Deity, he is the most unaccountable of mortals.

The scene changes. Moses has disappeared. Let us consider those who followed him. At the period when the tottering government had received serious injury, there suddenly arose in Israel a long succession of prophets, victims of hatred and misfortune—yet ever patient, and ever intrepid—who come to the people, each in his turn, declaring—*Thus saith the Lord!* Let us endeavour to discover the mysterious power which impels them, one after the other, to go and submit to the same misfortunes, in consequence of repeating the same lessons. Were they the secret agents of a prince, whose government they were designed to

strengthen? So far from it, kings were the objects of their censure. Forcing their way through crowds of courtiers, they confront the monarch himself, and compel him to listen to these novel accents—*Thou art the man!* They show him on the wall the hand-writing which pronounces the ruin of his kingdom. Perhaps they were flatterers of the multitude—popular orators, eager for applause and celebrity. Hear how they flatter the people—*O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?* And they unfold, before their astonished eyes, the long catalogue of their crimes: they compel them to see themselves, covered with disgrace and cruelty. Do they come to strengthen the hands of the priests? Why then make public, and in a manner so frightful, the reproach of the sanctuary? Why does Isaiah indignantly reject the offerings which were not accompanied by purity of heart, and which were profitable only to those who ministered at the altar?

Why is Jeremiah, that most zealous and most afflicted prophet, ever the victim of the hatred of the priests? Would you suspect them of being the secret agents of foreign conquerors? The suspicion is forbidden by the whole tenour of their lives. They suffered, they died, for their country, for their law, for their God; and if they chance to speak of the political interests of the nation, it is only to prevent perfidious alliances with idolatrous people. Let us seek elsewhere—let us look higher for the Master whom they served, without the expectation of any earthly recompense. For having spoken severe truths, Jeremiah was thrown into a prison; he quits it only to repeat, and unceasingly to repeat, his unwelcome predictions; and in the bitterness of his heart he exclaims—*O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil.*

*Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.** If, in the conduct and the language of Moses, we necessarily recognize the constant presence of the Most High; in the conduct and the language of the prophets we see him, as it were, face to face, conducting these, his devoted servants, to the conflict.

Christians! were I not apprehensive of wearying your attention, how many circumstances, not less remarkable, might I offer to your notice. I would exhibit to you those ancient prophecies, some of which are so clear; prophecies, of which even our own age witnesses the wonderful fulfilment. I would claim your admiration of those moral precepts, so remarkable for their mildness and their purity, in a rude age, when mankind sometimes

* Jeremiah xx. 7—9.

appeared to desire no other laws than those which would sanction disorder, and allow the oppression of the weak. You would observe the wonderful harmony which subsists among twenty writers, differing in age, in station, in education, in character; and, what is still more striking, the manner in which each of them, in succession, gradually contributes to the increasing developement of the counsels of God, and to the features which they pourtray of the promised Messiah. With holy admiration you would contemplate that ray of light, which, darting from the bosom of darkness, shows us the God of the universe upon his throne. You would see it ever increasing in splendour as generations and ages pass away, and exhibiting to expectant mortals their God, their Saviour, and their own destiny, in glorious characters. You would behold it, at length, become a flood of light, flowing throughout the whole globe, purifying and ferti-

lizing as it flows. Then would you prostrate yourselves before God: you would recognize—you would celebrate his work.

2. *Objections.*—Alas! can it be necessary to accumulate so many proofs? Have you not been taught from your infancy to receive this law as divine? Yes; but the church still suffers from the effects of that lamentable period when the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament, was made the subject of infamous attacks. At that time, ridicule, sophistry, the most unblushing falsehood—all were employed to diminish its credit. A whole generation was reared in the midst of this impure atmosphere; their ears were assailed by profane jesting; and they never inquired what answer the God of the Old Testament had to make to its impious slanderers. What doubts, what false notions, do they still retain, whose misfortune it was to

receive their education in that unhappy age.*

These are not the only persons who need information. Along with them we may see men, who, with more religious feeling, are astonished at meeting with difficulties in the Old Testament, which they find it impossible to explain. They try to forget them; they abstain, even for pious reasons, from any longer reading a book which they cannot understand. I am persuaded that these doubts might be easily removed, were I to show you the

* "The writers of the eighteenth century, who have treated the sacred books of the Hebrews both with contempt and fury, are miserably superficial judges of antiquity; and with the genius, the character and the religious customs of the Jews, they were least of all acquainted. He who can be diverted, with Voltaire, at the expence of Ezekiel, or of the book of Genesis, must unite the profoundest ignorance with the most deplorable levity. Such diversion is truly wretched!"—B. Constant, *De la Religion*, &c. Vol. ii. p. 210.

true situation of the writers of the Old Testament, as well as the nature of the Divine purposes. In this pulpit it is impossible for me to enter fully into the subject. I think I shall be able, however, to give a general view of the causes of your alarm.

Perhaps you are distressed at meeting in the Old Testament with narratives, or with representations, which seem to you unbefitting the God of holiness. But would you have these books present you with a romance, instead of a history of ancient times? Ought they not to give us a faithful picture of the patriarchs; to show them covering the plain with their flocks, with their shepherds and with their tents; or displaying a rustic hospitality under their vine and fig-tree; in a word, to describe them with their simple, and not unfrequently coarse manners—their energetic, and sometimes savage virtues? This the sacred historians have done. Would you expect, that in describ-

ing the simple scenes of an infant world, they should borrow, from an advanced period of civilization, a delicacy of sentiment and expression unknown to their age? If sometimes, then, in the vehement exhortations of the prophets, you meet with representations which astonish, or which shock you, forget not that these sacred books address themselves first of all to the Jews. They are Jews whose feelings are to be wrought upon or roused; and you are inadequate judges of the means which are necessary for this purpose. With the progress of time, civilization, ever advancing, refines language, at least, if not manners. In an age yet barbarous, the historians of the Old Testament employ not your language, but their own; and you can no more expect that they should change that, than their character. My brethren, if you are possessed of that refinement which has been the result of your intellectual and religious habits; if you would fain dis-

cover in the language of the ambassadors of God, a simplicity less undisguised, and a delicacy more strict, do not condemn these pious men, who, in the faithful discharge of their duty, have spoken the language of their times, in order to make themselves intelligible by those for whom they wrote. Rather recognize in yourselves the effects of that Christianity, which, for the first time, made known to the world that high standard of purity, the want of which you now feel from experience—which has rendered the world capable of imagining it, and worthy to admire it. Recognize its influence (and, consequently, the results of those revelations which prepared the way for it), even in those elevated sentiments, that delicate sensibility, that nice sense of propriety, in which your complaints originate.

Christians! I think I understand you. What astonishes you, are certain minute precepts—certain trifling or singular mira-

cles, which seem unworthy of the Lord of the universe. It is not in this place that I can answer every charge. I must confine myself to one reflection alone. Remember that all these things were designed, not for you, but for the Jews. Insulated as they may appear, they form parts of a magnificent plan, the object of which was, to leave a deep impression on the Hebrews,—to secure the affections, the habits, the whole soul, both of present and future generations. This plan is still in existence; it is developed in the Old Testament; it has long excited the admiration of those who have the wisdom to discover it, and to meditate aright upon it. Without, at this time, entering into any examination of it, I would have you observe the effects it has produced, and judge whether the real author of the Old Law did not adopt the best means of accomplishing his purpose. In the course of a few centuries, the Jewish people had become so identified with the

strict law and the minute form of worship to which they were subjected, that this state of things had become a necessary part of their existence. They had no thought, no feeling, that was not in accordance with their law. They died, rather than renounce it. Torn from its roots by the thunderbolt, this ancient tree has been thrown with violence far from its native soil; but wonderful to relate, its dispersed and mutilated branches still flourish, full of sap and life, and the Jewish exile, in despite of time and distance, retains all that it was possible for him to preserve of the laws and the worship of his fathers: so well adapted to its purpose was the impression made by Moses, more than thirty centuries ago.* Thirty centuries! Hear it, ye

* "Moses was anxious that the people he had formed should harbour no thought, should do no action, that was not anticipated, and in accordance with the law. He so allied, so incorporated the Israelites with the laws which he had given them,

jurists, ye learned legislators,—the work of Moses exists after the lapse of thirty centuries! Which of you will dare to flatter himself with like success? Acknowledge then the wisdom of the Deity, and his hand; prostrate yourselves, not before man, who was only the feeble instrument, but before God, who was the author.

There is another objection, apparently more serious, and which, doubtless, now

and with the customs he had prescribed, that they could not be separated without destruction awaiting them. He gave them a peculiar existence, and rendered them incapable of being amalgamated with other people. By means of a book, he formed a nation which might subsist without a country. As long as a handful of Jews shall remain, so long will the Jewish law and people exist. Every Jew is a living transcript of the law. The Jew is neither a European, nor an Asiatic, nor an African—he is neither a republican, nor an advocate for a monarchy. At all times, and in all places, he is a Jew, and nothing but a Jew.”—Massias, *Rapport de la nature à l'homme et de l'homme à la nature*. Vol. iii. p. 171.

occurs to you. The Jewish revelation sometimes seems to obscure the justice of God, or to contradict his benevolence. Severe chastisements, sanguinary executions, the hand of Jehovah ever ready to smite, the innocent sometimes sacrificed with the guilty;—is it here that we can recognize our God? My brethren, let us not continually confine ourselves within the narrow compass of our own customs and our own feelings; let us not continually forget the character of the Jewish people—the immense resources and the vast counsels of the Most High.

Consider what a people the Hebrews were! What a mixture of intractable dullness, pride, and obstinacy! In vain do their ears and eyes witness the most stupendous miracles—their hearts are still unmoved. To persuade them to submit to the law, to compel them to be happy, the abyss must open beneath their feet—the thunder must roll above their heads. If blood flows; if the lightnings of Sinai

Apply these reflections, my brethren, to those tragical accounts which alarm you, in the ancient law; and behind the exterminating angel, who smites with the sword in the name of Jehovah, you will discover a God of mercy and of love, who smiles with affection on his frail children.

In the midst of a solemn procession,* the holy ark,—the awful throne of Jehovah, the mysterious monument, which not even the Levites themselves were permitted to uncover or to touch,—the holy ark, concealed beneath the sacred veil, was slowly conveyed to the new abode which David had designed for it. In its progress, pious songs, burnt offerings, and incense declared the devotion of the monarch and the joy of Israel. But Israel and David have forgotten with what sacred awe the ark should be encompassed; they mistake the grand religious and national interests with which this reverence is associated. A great lesson

* 2 Samuel vi. 1 Chronicles xiii.

is necessary: it is about to be given. The car is shaken and inclines; the ark is on the point of falling. A man rushes forward: with rash piety his hand supports it, and restores it to its station—he falls down dead! At this scene the Jews are troubled; the terrified procession pauses; Judah anxiously bethinks herself of the divine will and the prescribed rites;* the people contemplate with terror the corpse, whose features, disfigured by fear and by death, seem to bear the impress of God's anger: in the meantime, the soul of the pious Uzza, joyfully escaping from this world of trouble, ascends in triumph to the abodes of felicity: already it reposes with delight in the bosom of its God! Is it here, then, inconsiderate men! that ye see injustice and cruelty? Repel the objections, which a little more reflection, or a little more knowledge, would enable you to dissipate; and if you have neither the time thoroughly to examine all, nor

* 1 Chronicles xv. 12.

the ability to comprehend all, confide, at least, in God, who has encompassed the old law with such powerful evidence, and in the Saviour, who has placed it under his infallible protection.

Application.—In former times, my brethren, God in his mercy gave the Old Testament to the Hebrews, to enlighten them, and to lead them to Jesus: he designed it also for our improvement and our salvation. Preserved to our times, it is in our own possession. Happy they, who gratefully acknowledge this gift!

Christians! from this day, once in each week, the sacred records, which of old prepared for Christ faithful disciples, will be illustrated in this pulpit. Make a point of coming to hear; and forsake not our temples at a time when they unfold their gates for the express purpose of imparting that light, of which you feel the want—that knowledge, in which you complain you are deficient. Shall we, by

our lukewarmness, allow an institution to decay, which we owe to the wisdom and the piety of our fathers; for which strangers envy us; and which is so well calculated to foster in the church the knowledge of Holy Scripture, the habit of reading it, and the ability to understand it? Beware, my brethren, how you neglect aids so precious, and of which you may so easily avail yourselves. But you should do still more. Often, in your own homes, devote a portion of your time to the writings of the Old Covenant, and combine a perusal of them with the study of the New Testament. You will behold in them some rays of the glory of the Son of God. This employment will elevate your souls and speak to your hearts. Read the history of the Jewish people. Contemplate the constant and sublime operations of a paternal providence, which makes *all things work together for good to those who love God*, and you will learn to cast upon that God the burthen of your

cares. Read the Psalms,—poetic monuments of the humility of a monarch and the sensibility of a warrior,—in which the most fervent piety exhibits itself in so many varied forms. Read them, and you will learn to bewail your faults—to submit to God; and while you contemplate his benefits and his works, to partake of the pure and lively emotions of an animated and confiding piety. Read the Prophets. Fear not to follow Isaiah in his lofty flight, and let his glowing imagination elevate your thoughts to the throne of the Most High. Listen to the sighs of Jeremiah, and while you behold him sitting amidst blood-stained ruins, consider what those nations become who forsake their God. Harken to the prophetic voice of Daniel, piercing the darkness of the night, and already announcing the name of Christ, and bow before the Sun of Righteousness, the dawn of which that voice proclaims. If the prophet-king, in the midst of the cares of empire and the

anxieties of his restless life, eagerly cherished, by night and by day, the law of his God; if, in the liveliness of his gratitude, he sometimes left his couch to celebrate the precious gift which God had bestowed upon the world, will not you,—to whom it is given to know still more of his paternal counsels, and the sacred beauties of the writings of the Old Testament,—will not you find some delight in these pious meditations?

My brethren, have you never understood the mercy and loving-kindness, of which the Old Testament is for you the pledge? Ere we were born, when our ancestors, immersed in barbarism, performed an unholy worship upon altars streaming with human blood, then God thought upon us! He had compassion upon those numerous generations, who were about to be born only to displease him and to die! Moved with pity, he called Abraham; he commissioned Moses; he inspired the prophets; he commanded

them to announce a Saviour; to prepare for him a way; to commit to faithful men the sacred charter, which so many centuries beforehand promised him to our miserable race. Precious charter! Awful and venerable monument of man's salvation and Jehovah's mercy—who would, who could neglect thy divine oracles? Rather, whose tongue shall cease to celebrate this gift? What soul is so insensible as not to be affected by it? God loved us before we were born! No; we will not reject any means of salvation which he offers to us. We will cheerfully praise him for his mercies of old, as well as for those more recent. We will study all that he has done for us; all the different methods by which he designs to conduct his children to happiness; every line of that *Scripture, which is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* Lord,

thou knowest the sincerity of our resolutions, but thou knowest also their inconstancy. Grant us those Christian and sincere dispositions, with which thy Word shall render us happier and better. Lord, teach us to understand thy law! Amen.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PENTATEUCH IS AS OLD AS THE JEWISH LAW.

Two of the proofs noticed in p. 4 and 5 require some illustration.

I. The style of the historian gradually, but perceptibly changes, as the narrative approaches the age of Moses. Every thing seems then to indicate a contemporary writer. Keeping this in mind, let us divide the history of the Pentateuch into three parts.

The eleven first chapters of Genesis will form one of these divisions. We find here an incomplete and rapid sketch, which suppresses many intervening events and accompanying circumstances.

The form of the narrative often reminds us of those brief inscriptions, which are entrusted to marble for the purpose of transmitting some knowledge of important facts to posterity. In a word, every thing indicates a history formed on the authority of ancient and concise documents.

The history of the ancestors of the Hebrews occupies the remainder of the first book of the Pentateuch. The time, and still more the subject, brings it much nearer to the delivery of the law. A complete, animated, and coherent history may now be perceived, in which those circumstances that are interesting are not omitted, while unimportant details are not recorded. Such should a national history be, written a few centuries after the events have taken place, when the recollections, the monuments, the records, carefully preserved in every family, render the traditions of past ages both important and popular.

In a history entirely contemporaneous, we expect something of a different kind. The colouring is more true: the turns of expression more lively; because the writer has himself seen, felt, and experienced the things concerning which he writes: because his imagination has no effort to make, to place him in the situation of the actors; the details are more numerous and more amplified: because he is acquainted with them all. They are not always well chosen: because he is an insufficient judge of their influence upon future events, and of their relative importance in the eyes of posterity. The succession and connexion of facts are sometimes less distinctly described: because the writer constantly hesitates between the strictly chronological order, and that in which these facts have struck him, and in which they appeared to him to have influenced each other: and because the nature or the vividness of his impressions often deceive him, with

regard to the importance of events, or their mutual dependence. Now such, precisely, is the character of the historical part of the four last books of the Pentateuch.

In order more clearly to see these varieties of style, in the three sections of the Mosaic history, we shall do well to compare together some passages of each. We may take, for example, in the first, the mysterious address of Lamech to his wives;* the translation of Enoch,† related in a single verse; or the history of the tower of Babel.‡ In the second, the victory of Abraham;§ the history of Hagar;|| or the sacrifice of Isaac.¶ The difference between the second and the third is less decided; it may be discovered, however, by comparing analogous subjects; for instance, the call of

* Gen. iv. 23, 24. † Gen. v. 24. ‡ Gen. xi. 1—9. § Gen. xiv. || Gen. xxi. 14—21. ¶ Gen. xxii.

Abraham,* with the mission of Moses;† the destruction of Sodom,‡ with the last plague of Egypt.§

II. The manner in which the writer introduces the law, moreover, serves to prove the antiquity of the Pentateuch. I have here four remarks to make.

The history of the law embraces a period of forty years. During this period the laws were sometimes modified by the divine legislator, according to the circumstances and times. Had the writer of the Pentateuch lived at a later period, would he have known, would he have recorded any but those laws which finally continued in force? Would he, at least, have given us the original form of the law, in an absolute manner, without allowing us to suspect any possible restriction? For example,—in Leviticus xvii. 1—9. (that is, in the code, and not

* Gen. xii. 1—9. † Exodus iii. and iv. ‡ Gen. xix. § Exodus xi. and xii.

in the history) it is commanded, under pain of death, that no animal shall be killed for the consumption of the people, except in the form of a sacrifice to God, and at the door of the tabernacle. The people were encamped in the desert, the law was important,* and might easily be complied with. When, after forty years, the people were about to enter the land of Canaan, Moses repealed this law; which, in an extensive country, and among an agricultural people, would have been impracticable. The Pentateuch fails not to give the new law, as it had given the original one. Deut. xii. 15, 21.

The institutions of Moses are not entirely his own work. In many instances he does nothing more than sanction, under certain important modifications, the ancient customs of the Hebrews. When

* It was important, as the means of preventing the people from offering sacrifices to idols, at their own abodes, in imitation of the Egyptians or Canaanites.

this is the case, we scarcely ever fail to perceive it in the tone of the writer. We never see him insisting upon the details of a law, already known from long usage: he contents himself with declaring that it is a law, or with explaining how it is to be observed. On the contrary, the original institutions are described in all their detail; they are accompanied by all the precautions, means of fulfilment, and motives, which the legislator thinks necessary to render them binding.* Does not

* *Note by the Translator.*—Moses often supposes the existence of some more ancient laws among the Hebrews, founded on established usage, which he sometimes confirms, amends, or abolishes. He does the same also, in respect of laws which were observed among other nations, and especially among the Egyptians—laws with which the Hebrews were well acquainted, and to some of which they had been in subjection. A reference, not only to the books of Job and Genesis, but to the present customs of Eastern nations, in which the Mosaic law was never observed,—and in which, as Michaelis justly remarks, “ancient manners have maintained them-

this difference arise from the circumstance of the law being framed at the very moment when it was put in force? If it was really the work of a later writer, why should he describe so differently the laws which originated with Moses and

selves so perfectly, that in reading the description of a wandering Arab, one might easily suppose one's self in Abraham's tent,"—will supply us with much information on this subject, and show us the sources whence the Hebrew legislator derived many of his laws. Among those ancient consuetudinary laws, which were in force prior to Moses, and which he has either confirmed or improved, may be mentioned,—the law of the *Levirate*, which required that a man should marry the widow of his brother, if he died without children—See Genesis xxxviii. and Deut. xxv. 5—10.; the prohibition of muzzling the ox when he was threshing the corn, which was an ancient Arabian custom—See *Russell's Natural History of Aleppo*, vol. i. p. 76. and Deut. xxv. 4.; the law which limited the period of servitude, in the case of Hebrew servants, to seven years—See Genesis xxix. 15—27.; the law of suretiship—Job xvii. 3.; and the privileges of primogeniture—Genesis xxvii. But the case of

those which were prior to his time? Some centuries after him, would they not both be equally parts of the same entire system, received by the Hebrews under the same sanction—similar institutions, equally venerable, and often equally neglected?

If the compiler of the Pentateuch had been of a later age than Moses, it is impossible that this book should not, in some way or another, have borne the impress of the age in which it was com-

the *Goël* is a more striking illustration of the author's remark. By the term *Goël* is meant "the nearest relation of a person murdered, whose right and duty it was to avenge his kinsman's death with his own hand." This law Moses presupposes. He neither institutes the office, nor defines the duty of the *Goël*; because the office was of ancient standing, and the duty was well understood and practised. All he does is to provide against the abuse of the law, by affording an asylum and protection to the innocent manslayer—See Exodus xxi. Numbers xxxv. Deuteronomy xix.—See also *Michaelis's Commentaries on the Laws of Moses.*

posed. How, for instance, is it possible to believe—if it had originated in the time of David or his successors—that the writer would not, in some passage, have betrayed that he lived under Hebrew monarchs; that he was acquainted with their customs; that Jerusalem was their residence,—the centre of the national riches, honour, and glory. The Pentateuch exhibits not the slightest trace of this kind. There is frequent mention in it of Hebron or of Sichem, but hardly ever of the future capital of David. It discovers no idea of Hebrew kings, except it be in seven verses in Deuteronomy (xvii. 14—20.) where the legislator predicts that the nation will one day place a king at its head. In no other part does a thought of the kind occur. The existence of kings is not supposed, either in the judicial or executive department. They are never thought of, either for war or for peace.

My fourth remark is little more than a particular application of the preceding one. The lawgiver expects disobedience—he foresees that his institutions will soon undergo some alteration; but the very way in which these books mention it, proves that the writer was ignorant of the nature of that alteration. There is a striking contrast between the history of the legislation, which supposes that such and such a law will always be observed, and the history of the people, which informs us it never was observed. It follows, as a moral proof, that the institution of the one is prior, not only to the other, but to the facts which it records. Had the author of the Pentateuch been really of a later age than Moses, he would have endeavoured, either to give a faithful account of the institutions of his own time, or to restore the law to its original form. But surely, whichever of these two plans he had

adopted, he would have produced any thing but the Pentateuch. In the first case, he would have described the Mosaic institution as he himself was acquainted with it; such as his own age had made it, and not as it had been framed originally by Moses. He would then have omitted those laws which scarcely survived the lawgiver; he would hardly, for example, have noticed the law of the Jubilee, which so speedily fell into disuse. This very law, however, and many others which were similarly treated, occupy a most important place in the Pentateuch, as well as in the plan of Moses; consequently, they altogether refute this first supposition. In the second case, the author, desirous of attacking the abuses recently introduced, would, on the contrary, have particularly insisted upon those laws which the people neglected, and which it would have been the object of his pious fraud to restore. He would

have endeavoured, for example, to suppress the worship in high places; the practice of which was so common, and so injurious to their religion and their country. Now the Pentateuch contents itself with a precaution, carefully prohibiting all other worship but that of the tabernacle. It is impossible, in the case supposed, that at a more recent period the writer would not have entered into other details. He would, doubtless, have recollected that neither lofty hills, nor deep groves, nor the legendary accounts of a vision or of a miracle, were a sufficient excuse for the institution of a new form of worship; he would have expressly interdicted the most celebrated of these high places; he would have declared that in Jerusalem the Deity had placed his name and his glory: there he would have commanded his worshippers to assemble. Thus, on every supposition, he could not have remained indifferent

to the modifications which the worship underwent subsequently to Moses: He must necessarily have said something less, or something more, upon this subject than is expressed in the Pentateuch.

CHAPTER II.

THE PENTATEUCH IS THE WORK OF MOSES.

The nature of the five books of the Pentateuch has led us to regard them as the work, not only of a contemporary writer, but of Moses himself.* This opinion is founded, first, upon the object and spirit of each of these books; and secondly, upon the indirect indications which they exhibit respecting the situation, the habits, the knowledge of the writer.

I. In the first eleven chapters, *Genesis* presents us with the imposing picture of the origin of things. It is, so to speak, the vestibule of the majestic edifice of revelation—it is the basis upon which it rests. This is not, however, the special object of the whole book. In the next part we find certain precious

* See p. 9—11.

documents interspersed, relating to the neighbouring people and to the ancestors of the Hebrews; but even this is only a secondary object of the work. In compiling this concluding part, the writer appears to have contemplated a very different and more important end. We are at no loss to perceive that his object is to stimulate the Israelites to the conquest of Canaan, by means of a history, the carefully combined circumstances of which were calculated to inspire them with courage and ardour. In fact, what do we find more prominent than this in the second part of the book of Genesis?

We behold the Deity make an especial choice of the ancestors of the Hebrew people—distinguish them and their descendants from all other men, by magnificent promises and by a high destiny. The Hebrews thus learn that they are the chosen people. They are instructed to reckon at all times, and unhesitatingly, upon the divine favour.

We behold the land of Canaan already assigned to the Hebrews, in the person of their ancestor, Abraham. For five centuries his descendants live in expectation of this land: all their hopes are connected with it: all the promises of God refer to it. It was to exercise the first act of ownership, that Abraham receives the command to quit his own country. Jacob cannot leave it or return to it; but God, upon its frontiers, reminds him of the promised hour when the Canaanites shall be displaced by the Hebrews.* Joseph and his father, on the bed of death, give orders for their ashes to be conveyed thither, when this anxiously expected hour shall arrive. The Hebrews were thus assured that they marched to certain conquest; that the soil which they were about to take possession of by military force, had really, for ages, been their own; that they were commissioned by

* Gen. xxviii. 10—15. xxxii. 22—30. xxxv. 9—15. xlv. 1—4.

God to avenge the accumulated iniquities of the Amorites.

We behold the Deity accustoming the patriarchs to an implicit and unlimited confidence in his wisdom and benevolence. He is constantly putting their faith to the test, and instantly rewards it. Abraham, after a long period, sees himself childless. At a subsequent time, when he had become, contrary to all expectation, the father of two sons, he is commanded to expel the one, and to offer the other in sacrifice. Notwithstanding this, a divine voice has told him, and still repeats it, that his posterity shall be as numerous as the sands on the sea-shore. He believes it, and the promise is accomplished. His faith triumphs over the threatenings and obscurities of the future: his immoveable confidence is the conducting rod which always averts the thunderbolt, and affords the father of believers a protecting shelter in his God. Thus the Hebrews learned implicitly to obey their heavenly King,

without allowing themselves to be alarmed by appearances; they learned to expect a miracle, rather than to distrust God; to stifle even the emotions of nature, rather than in any instance to waver.

Thus, then, the object of Genesis is precisely that which the legislator must necessarily have proposed to himself. So complete is the harmony which subsists between the design of the one and the project of the other, that the two conceptions evidently indicate a single author.

In the three following books, we find alike the plan and the seal of Moses. *Exodus* ought always to be considered as intimately connected with the law. The main object of this book is to found and establish the principal portions of this law, on the great political deliverance with which the Hebrews had just been favoured. The writer reminds them of the plagues of Egypt; the passage of the Red Sea; the miracles of the desert; and so closely, with these glorious and

affecting recollections, does he unite the feast of Passover; the institution of the Sabbath; the renewal of the covenant; the solemn abandonment of idolatry; the ten fundamental commandments and their commentary; the rites and ceremonies of the worship of Jehovah,—that there arises a sacred obligation, or rather an absolute necessity, to obey, on the part of every one who has been the witness or the object of these miraculous favours. Do we not here also trace the design of Moses, and one of the surest means of accomplishing it?

Leviticus is not the book of the people, but of the priests. For their use it compiles, and in a more methodical form, the political, religious, and moral code. This book, then, is probably the work of the legislator, who has chosen the priests for the express purpose of confiding this charge to them, and who no where else gives them the necessary instructions for fulfilling it.

The book of *Numbers* could only have been written in the desert, by the leader of the people, or under his direction. It bears the evident marks of this long and vague period, which extended from the second to the thirty-ninth year after their quitting Egypt,—a period of privation and complaint, of sojournings and wanderings,—without any definite object, without a fixed route, and accompanied even by few remarkable events. This book contains, in a strictly chronological order, all the important documents which it was thought proper to preserve; such as regulations of police, new legal institutions, authentic registers of the census and the gifts, narratives of striking and isolated facts.

With regard to *Deuteronomy*, it is yet more evident that Moses was the author of that book; and I shall add no illustration to what I have already said, p. 10. Besides, what reasoning would convince

that man, whom the perusal of the book itself had failed to convince?

The object and the spirit of the Pentateuch, then, necessarily remind us of Moses, and show us in him the writer whom we sought to discover.

II. The combination of knowledge and habits of thinking, observable in the author of the Pentateuch, lead us to the same conclusion.

It is quite evident that the writer is a man of education and possessed of extensive knowledge. We have here no vulgar man—no fisherman become an apostle; who, though uncultivated and uninformed, is able to write of sublime truths in popular language, but ever remains a stranger to general literature and science. The author of the Pentateuch is a man of considerable information. He attends to the form and matter of his history: he collects together historical, genealogical, and geographical details; which, though not essential to his purpose,

add to the perspicuity and utility of his work; he composes hymns, which bear the impress of his genius no less than of his piety; he compiles the book of Genesis from ancient documents, carefully and methodically,* as the researches of

* *Note by the Translator.*—There is “reason to believe, that Moses not only obtained his knowledge of past events from written documents, but that he has incorporated the documents themselves, and that the book of Genesis is little else than a collection of such ancient writings.” In support of this opinion, the general principle of which has been maintained by Vitrिंगa, Calmet, M. l’Abbé le François, Bp. Gleig, M. Astruc, Eichhorn, Möller, and Rosenmüller, it may be observed, that the phrase—*These are the generations*, frequently occurs, and as frequently seems to be a preface to some distinct and original memoir. The variations which appear in the accounts of persons and transactions, seem favourable to the conjecture, that Moses has made use of two or more documents. Thus the account of the creation in chap. ii. differs from that in chap. i.; the description of the animals which entered the ark in chap. vi. 19, 20. differs from that in chap. vii. 2, 3. “The account of

the learned have proved. This writer, then, was an enlightened man: he was no stranger to literature: he held learning in estimation.

Abraham's marriage with Keturah, and of his children by her, is not to be reconciled with the preceding history of the patriarch. Two accounts are given of the origin of the name of Bethel; and also of the substitution of the name of Israel for that of Jacob. Compare ch. xxviii. 10—19. xxxii. 22—30. xxxv. 9—15." "But a still more striking evidence that Moses has made use of some ancient memoirs, arises from the curious fact, that in different parts of the book of Genesis the Supreme Being is spoken of under different appellations: sometimes being called *God*, sometimes *Jehovah*, and sometimes *Jehovah God*; but generally, either *God* or *Jehovah*." This distinction, it is affirmed, is too marked to be accidental: and in all those passages of the book of Genesis which differ in the appellations of the Deity, a difference in style is clearly discernible by the critical eye. This peculiarity may be best explained, by supposing that Moses had two or more memoirs, portions of which he selected and arranged as it suited his purpose.—See *Wellbeloved's Dissertation on the Pentateuch*, p. 6—8.

This writer, too, was thoroughly acquainted with the history of the patriarchs, with the origin of the Hebrews, and of the world. Every page of Genesis proves this. The spirit of inspiration was doubtless given him, to enable him to undertake his work, and to render it correct; but, as in the case of the Evangelists, under the new dispensation, it is by human means that the author appears to have been instructed. He was then a Hebrew, and a distinguished Hebrew.

But he was not only acquainted with the history of his own people; he knew, and he relates minutely, all the circumstances of the recent revolution, which effected their freedom from Egyptian bondage. He had seen all, he knew all that had occurred at that period, private as well as public facts—thoughts as well as actions: he was, then, one of the principal actors.

He knows the law as he only could know it by whom it was conceived. His

book was the only authorized source from which the Hebrews could derive a knowledge of it; and we ourselves obtain our acquaintance with it from no other source. He must, then, have been either the legislator himself, or one most intimately acquainted with his purposes and thoughts.

He was much more familiar with the manners and the laws of Egypt than could have been expected from an ordinary Hebrew. We are astonished at finding in his writings exact information respecting the finances, the commerce, the religion, the military establishment, the civil customs of the Egyptians. This is so much the more remarkable, because the author gives it undesignedly, and a superficial reader might not discover it. The aversion of the Egyptians from a pastoral life, and from the employment of shepherds; the severe law, which excludes every stranger from their table; their preferring horses to camels; their entirely

abandoning commerce, which they leave to neighbouring nations; the tax upon the soil, under the form of tithes; the exemption granted to the lands of the priests: these, and a thousand other similar circumstances, are presented by the books of Genesis and Exodus to the critical inquirer;* whilst, at the same time, and without any reference to the Bible, the antiquary, on his part, discovers them also in his old monuments and ancient histories—a remarkable coincidence, which every fresh research tends to complete and confirm. The author of the *Pentateuch*, then, had lived in Egypt, probably near those depositaries of science and of power—the priesthood and the court.†

* See also p. 83, the translation of a note from Eichhorn.

† *Note by the Translator.*—It may be well to add, in the words of Bishop Marsh, that “the strongest argument that can be produced, to show that the

Once more: this writer was acquainted with other nations, besides the Egyptians and the Hebrews. In the tenth, twenty-fifth, and thirty-sixth chapters of Genesis may be seen the documents which he collected, relating to the origin and the dispersion of all the people then known, particularly to the different descendants of Abraham. He tells us whence these great families arose; their names; the titles and genealogies of their chiefs; the geographical situation of their different tribes. Such information, at that period, could only have been acquired by travelling. He had, then, visited these Ishmaelite, Midianite, and Idumæan tribes: he had sojourned among them: he had thence derived those documents

Pentateuch was written by a man born and educated in Egypt, is the use of Egyptian words; words, which never were, nor ever could have been used by a native of Palestine."—*The Authenticity of the five books of Moses considered*, p. 13.

respecting their history, which were afterwards inserted in the book of Genesis.*

* I must be permitted here to offer a translation of a passage from Eichhorn, upon the authenticity of the four last books of the Pentateuch. This passage will complete our reflections, and is calculated at once to interest and to convince my readers:—

“ If any thing could invincibly demonstrate to a friend of truth the high antiquity of these books, it is, assuredly, the assemblage of those numerous marks of minute veracity, which an impostor of a later age would not have been able to offer. I will here mention two or three, merely to give some idea of it. The latter books of Moses evidently suppose many things, which history has transmitted to us, relating to the ancient Egyptians. They regarded bloody sacrifices with horror, Exodus viii. 26. The water which they usually drank was that of the Nile, Exodus vii. 18. Mortal blows were punished with death, Exodus ii. 15. The study of nature was exclusively the province of wise men, pretended enchanters, Exodus vii. viii. In Egypt there was a military *caste*, and at the same time an army always ready for service, Exodus xiv. 6. Precious stones were engraven in *intaglio*, Exodus xxviii. 9—11. A writer less familiar with the

Let us now bring together these several data. We shall discover in them, in the first place, a complete proof of the antiquity of the Pentateuch. The writer, we have said, is a Hebrew; an actor in the revolution; born in Egypt; and had visited the different tribes of the desert. This, however, is not all; and yet, upon the authority of these circumstances alone,

history of Egypt than Moses was, could not have compared the antiquity of Hebron with that of Tanis.* A more modern writer could not have spoken with so much exactness of the future conquest of Canaan. Would he not, some where or other, have inserted the order for destroying the temples of idols? The Canaanites had only altars and groves; and these are what Moses always supposes. How clearly do we mark in these books the progress of knowledge and civilization! In Jacob's benediction, the patriarch celebrates the happiness of Zabulon, whose lands will border upon the rich and commercial capital of the

* Eichhorn here falls into the error pointed out by Maltebrun (*Précis de géographie universelle*, vol. i. p. 165), and renders the Hebrew word, which really signifies Heliopolis, the ancient capital of Egypt, by *Tanis*.

we may, with high probability, pronounce this writer to be no other than Moses himself. We are acquainted with all that was extraordinary in his life: and every remarkable circumstance in it exactly corresponds with the facts which we have

Sidonians. In the song of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 19.), the poet, speaking of the same tribe, mentions an additional circumstance, and alludes to the glass which the Sidonians obtained from the river Belus," &c. Eichhorn *Einleitung in das Alte T.* 3d edit. § 442. *Note.*

Note by the Translator.—With regard to the error into which M. Cellérier supposes Eichhorn to have fallen, and to which he adverts in the Note in the preceding page, it may be observed, in vindication of the learned Professor of Göttingen, that the Septuagint, in this case the most ancient and the best authority, not only renders Zoan by Tanis in Psalm lxxviii. 12, 43. and Isaiah xix. 13. but in Ezekiel xxx. 14, 15. distinguishes Tanis from Sais, which M. Maltebrun alleges that they have confounded with it. Even admitting that Zoan was Sais, there is no proof whatever that the Sais of Plato, as M. Maltebrun supposes, was the same as the Heliopolis of Herodotus.

just stated—Moses, reared in the court of Pharaoh; chief of a political revolution; legislator of the Hebrews; himself a Hebrew, and far superior to his countrymen in science and literature; sojourned among the wandering tribes of Arabia from his fortieth to his eightieth year, previous to the time when he could have composed the Pentateuch: it must have been on his return to the same places, some years after, that he did this. Are we not, then, authorized in believing that he was, in fact, the author of it: and if we combine with this argument, that which has been brought forward in the first part of this chapter, may we not consider this fact as demonstrated?

These two first chapters, and the opinions expressed p. 3—14, embrace but a small portion, and form a very slight sketch, of the arguments which might be adduced in favour of the authenticity of the Pentateuch. Such as they are, however, they appear to me to be sufficient to convince every honest man.

CHAPTER III.

MARKS OF HISTORICAL TRUTH IN GENESIS.

In p. 16 and 17, I have only glanced at the characters of historical truth in which Genesis abounds. By way of illustration, I will give a translation of a passage of Eichhorn which I had in view.*

“The form of the narratives in Genesis affords the most convincing proof of its authenticity, to every one who is capable

* In the whole of the first part of the preceding discourse, I have borrowed largely from this celebrated scholar—the Nestor of criticism. Though an admirer of his talents, I am, in general, far from sharing his critical principles, or approving of his hypotheses; but when treading upon safer ground, he devotes his powerful erudition to the defence of truth, I gladly partake of the enthusiasm which the vast labours, the fertile and ingenious mind of this extraordinary man justly excite.

of appreciating what is natural and simple; of going back, in imagination, to the infancy of the world; and of picturing to himself the domestic life of pastoral nations. The style of history must needs change with the usages of men: it must obey the varied influences of each people, each age, and each revolution. Now the book of Genesis describes, with remarkable fidelity, the infancy and the youth of the human race. The narratives are often nothing more than the domestic history of a few shepherds; but we every where discover the noble and frank simplicity of pastoral manners. If in one of those favouring hours, when the mind yields itself up to the influence of pure and tranquil reflections, you read with close attention, and an emotion of delight, some passage in the life of Abraham, of Isaac, or of Jacob; read afterwards, in the same way, some portion of that of David, Solomon, or one of the judges of Israel, and you will immediately feel the

distance which divides the two histories, as well as the two periods to which they refer, and the decided marks of inferiority in the latter picture. There, it is all simple nature which affects and interests you: here, it is nature still, but less animated and less undisguised. There, all the openness of frank simplicity: here, already more elegance and less originality. There, language fresh from the heart: here, the first traces of civilization and luxury. If age and long habit prevent you from making this experiment—if you cannot recal the feelings and the thoughts of youth, try it upon some child, whose taste education has not vitiated, and you will see what different impressions his tender mind will receive from these very different narratives.

“It must, however, be confessed, that these fresh colours lose much of their brilliancy when transferred from the original. I here make no charge against ancient or modern versions; but I will

affirm, that no translation can possess that unadorned simplicity, that freshness of colouring, which constitute the charm of Genesis. How, indeed, is it possible, in our precise, refined, and cold languages, adequately to convey the ideas which are embodied in their artless, free, and unaffected language? The Hebrew patriarch may with justice complain of his modern judges. These rash men have, on the authority of unfaithful versions, had the hardihood to condemn an original monument, with which they are unacquainted, and of which nothing could give them an adequate idea.

“ But to proceed. What impostor, let me ask, could possibly describe, with so much precision, the successive progress of civilization and of society? How could he have contrived to observe this gradual process, in so unlaboured a manner; in objects so different; with incidents so minute, so natural, so perfectly connected with each other: and all in such a way, as to be

capable of bearing the severest examination, without betraying the fraud?

“Abraham quits Mesopotamia, the country of shepherds: and all the circumstances of his life show him to be a man of pastoral habits entirely. Do guests visit him? He hastens to select a calf from his herds, which, like the Patroclus of Homer, he himself dresses. He offers no wine to the strangers; and yet wine at this time was not unknown in Palestine.* He presents them with milk, as we should expect a husbandman to do.† Isaac, on the contrary, rich in the inheritance he derived from Abraham, and less a stranger to the luxurious habits of the Canaanites, makes use of wine.‡ A kid brought from the pastures no longer satisfies his taste, as it had sufficed for his father: he must have venison—it must be dressed in his favourite way.§ His palate distinguishes the different kinds of

* Gen. xiv. 18. † Gen. xviii. 8. ‡ Gen. xxvii. 25. § Gen. xxvii. 4.

food; and it is by an artifice that Rebecca succeeds in imposing upon him.* Half shepherd and half husbandman, he rents a farm of the king of Gerar, and is no longer content to be rich in flocks.†

“The modern writer who should have invented this history in the name of Moses, would not have failed to represent civilization as making fresh advances with Jacob. He would have departed from the truth without suspecting it: and the historian of the Pentateuch is really more faithful to the probabilities of history. Civilization receded when Jacob, upon leaving Palestine, spent twenty years in Mesopotamia, in the midst of pastoral people. On the contrary, it advanced with Esau; because he lived in Palestine, and allied himself with the Canaanites.

“Commerce gradually promotes the intercourse of different nations. In the time of Abraham, we read of no exchange of corn between Egypt and Canaan. To

* Gen. xxvii. 9. † Gen. xxvi. 12.

avoid the consequences of famine, the patriarch is obliged to remove, together with his family, to the banks of the Nile.* His removal is facilitated by means of caravansaries, which already are established on the road.† Setting out from Arabia, the caravans of the Ishmaelites convey spices, resin and balm; and when opportunity offers, they sell or purchase slaves.‡ The Egyptians, of themselves, have no foreign commerce: this Genesis supposes, and it is confirmed by history.

“ Egypt, enjoying a regular government earlier than the neighbouring countries, surpasses them all, as might naturally be expected, in civilization and luxury. Even in the time of Abraham, the Pharaohs have a court.§ Abimelech, king of an Egyptian colony among the Philistines, imitates, on a small scale, the kings of the mother country—like

* Gen. xli. 57. † Gen. xlii. 27. ‡ Gen. xxxvii. 25. § Gen. xii. 14, 15.

them, he has menials and courtiers about him.* In Palestine, on the contrary, the king of Salem appears like a private individual.† Between Abraham and Jacob, the luxury of Egypt greatly increased. In the time of Joseph, we see in the court of Egypt great dignitaries, chamberlains, superintendents, chief cup-bearers, chief pantlers, a grand vizier, a police, a state-prison,‡ physicians attached to the establishment of the great, and a pompous ceremonial. Joseph, as grand vizier, has a table to himself; and the Egyptians who dine with him sit at that of his chamberlain.§ Pharaoh admits not Jacob to a familiar interview, as one of his ancestors had done with regard to Abraham; but to a formal audience, with so much ceremony, and so proud an affability, that even the style of the narrative partakes of it.|| Various solemnities accompany the installation of the

* Gen. xxi. 22. Gen. xxvi. 26. † Gen. xiv.

‡ Gen. xl. § Gen. xliii. 32. || Gen. xlvii. 7.

royal functionaries. Joseph, on his entering upon office, receives a chain of gold, a splendid costume, a retinue, and a ring. In Mesopotamia, where the Canaanites had not yet extended their commerce, we find, in the time of Jacob, but little gold or silver. Barter is at this time the only known means of procuring new articles. It was by tending flocks for twenty years that the patriarch obtained his two wives, his slaves, and his cattle. In Canaan, on the contrary, and in the neighbourhood of that Phœnicia which already commanded the commerce of the world, they had no longer, in the time of Abraham, recourse to barter: silver was substituted as a standard of value. It had not, as yet, received an impression; but its value was determined by weight.* It is not improbable, however, that the Phœnicians already, in the time of Jacob, had some rude coins.†

* Gen. xxiii. 16. † Gen. xxxiii. 19.

“In the first forty-four chapters of Genesis, no mention is made of horses. We hear of them as being first used on occasion of Jacob’s travelling into Egypt, when carriages were sent for the purpose by Joseph. History informs us, that in these remote ages they were used in Egypt, but almost unknown in Palestine.

“The forms of civil compacts among the patriarchs prove the highest antiquity. In Homer, contracts are made by word of mouth; and to render them obligatory, an appeal is made to the gods: they are accompanied by presents and symbolical ceremonies. In the same way, Abraham gives Abimelech seven sheep, in ratification of the alliance which they renewed, and of the cession of a contested well.* Jacob and Laban raise a heap of stones, in testimony of their reconciliation.† They affix to it a name, designed to be a memorial of it, as Abimelech and Abra-

* Gen. xxi. 30. † Gen. xxxi. 46.

ham had before done.* It is in the presence of witnesses that the latter purchases the cave of Machpelah.† Without any other security, he feels satisfied that his right to it will never be disputed. So in Homer, the Greeks and the Trojans consider the execution of a treaty as certain, because the two armies have heard the verbal promises of the contracting parties.

“The Pentateuch represents civilization as receding after the deluge: this is quite agreeable to the nature of things. Before that catastrophe, civilization seems more advanced than in the time of Abraham. For instance, the use of iron was then known: a long time elapsed afterwards before it is spoken of again. Some arts are still buried in the abyss which swallowed up the human race, and in the course of ages will be a second time invented.

* Gen. xxi. 31. † Gen. xxiii.

“But is not this what might have been expected? A single family survived the deluge, and peopled Asia anew. Was it possible for them to preserve a knowledge of all the arts? Were they acquainted with all? And let it be granted that they were acquainted with all, had they immediate occasion for them after the deluge? Their first care was to provide for their own existence: this would require all their time and all their energy. Hence the arts of luxury would be abandoned, and none but the commonest and most necessary would be exercised. It was impossible, therefore, that much of the knowledge of the antediluvian world should not lie dormant and be forgotten, after this important period, till a happy chance restored them to mankind. If, then, Moses, instead of allowing it to appear that civilization had been retarded, had represented it as having always continued its progressive march, we

should, in that case, have had much reason to suspect the fidelity of the historian.

“In short, let the records of Moses be compared with the most ancient histories of antiquity, and we shall quickly perceive which of these is the only pure source. There is not one that can bear comparison with Genesis—that can give even a shadow of the simplicity, the precision, and the philosophic truth of this extraordinary book. With the exception of this, we have nothing but popular and fabulous traditions; in which men of the profoundest learning, and most skilled in interpreting allegories and explaining symbols, can, however, discover no meaning. Even in the remotest times, the histories of which I speak have been hardly understood, by the very nations which preserved them; even then, disfigured by misplaced ornaments, by interpolations, by ridiculous comments,

by strange medleys, they had become unintelligible—the idea which was originally embodied in this gross mass had disappeared from it. Thus, for example, the most ancient philosophy, that which seeks after and teaches the origin of all things, while among other nations it generally becomes absurd and ridiculous, from a succession of errors, is, with the Hebrews, always full of simplicity, dignity, and truth. It is so free from the chimerical fancies of other nations—so superior to all their reveries, that on this account alone Genesis would merit the crown which we decree to it.”*

My readers will thank me that I have made them acquainted with this passage. I must apprize them, however, that many of the proofs brought forward by the author, in a great measure depend upon very slight shades of expression in the

* Eichhorn. *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, § 428, 3d edition.

original text, which will be sought for in vain in our translations. It is impossible that any translation should give, in all respects, an exact representation of the original; especially when the translator has to do with a book so ancient, with manners so foreign to his own, and with a language of so different a genius. The learned critic whom I have just cited, might have strengthened his last remark by an additional consideration. The superiority of Genesis to the ancient fables of Egypt, of India, or of Chaldaea, is so much the more striking, because there are many things in it common to all these; and it appears to be the original depository of the truths which are distorted by the others. Some feeble rays of light, derived from Genesis, or from the sources whence the book of Genesis was compiled: modified, altered, and almost lost among the ancient families of the human race, may at once explain

these similarities, and exhibit, in a more striking manner, the divine superiority of the only authentic version preserved and transmitted to posterity by Moses, under the direction of that God whose messenger he was.

CHAPTER IV.

TESTIMONIES RENDERED BY MODERN
DISCOVERIES TO THE MOSAIC CHRONOLOGY.

In page twenty, I have alluded to some modern discoveries, which confirm the epoch assigned in Genesis to the creation of man, or which, at least, refute some plausible objections. Were I now to notice them all, I should increase the bulk of my work, which I am unwilling to do; and more knowledge would be necessary for the purpose than I possess. Happily, we are in possession of a work of this kind, though composed with a very different object. The preliminary discourse which the celebrated Cuvier has prefixed to his *Recherches sur les ossemens des quadrupèdes fossiles*, and which is at once a fruit of genius, of science, of long labour, and of a practised pen,

really demonstrates what I have affirmed. The author, though professedly making it his object to develop nature, and not to defend religion, indisputably proves the recent origin, both of the human race and of our continents. No one would hope to say more, or say it better, than he has done. It would be difficult to select any passage as an example. I would rather refer my readers to this work; and here mention only one triumph of the Mosaic chronology—a triumph quite recent, and the exhibition of which the learned world has just witnessed.

Among the attacks which science has attempted to make upon the authority of the Pentateuch, few are more recent or notorious than those of which Egyptian antiquities have been the occasion. Some distinguished men, who were associated in a celebrated expedition, all the perils of which they fearlessly shared; who studied, both with courage and perseverance, the hitherto superficially noticed

wonders of ancient Egypt, and naturally enthusiastic on the subject of those monuments, which were the objects of their labours and the pledges of their fame, fell into some errors as to their importance and antiquity. The famous zodiacs, among others those of Esné and Denderah, appeared to them to be of incalculable antiquity. This pretended discovery was immediately published, as having decided the question, and carrying back Egyptian civilization beyond the time of Moses, and even of the deluge. But after the lapse of some years, and particularly since one of these zodiacs has been brought to Europe and exposed to view; since the accumulated researches of travellers have given other learned men an opportunity of examining an abundance of Egyptian monuments, papyri, mummies, temples and tombs, together with their hieroglyphics and inscriptions, circumstances have changed, and it is in favour of the book of Genesis

that the question is decided. In the first place, the examination of these different monuments, carried on with more coolness, has considerably lessened the idea which was entertained of their grandeur and their importance, as well as of the sciences and the state of civilization, of which they were the pledge.* The delusion once exposed, and the first exaggerations set aside, the question was discussed with more impartial criticism. Particular attention was paid to the zodiacs. They were compared with the descriptions of their learned admirers; and doubts very soon arose and gathered strength. The calculations were again made, and found inaccurate;† the hypotheses were brought to the test, and found untenable. Many other new hypotheses, all different from each other,

* See the *Journal des Savans*, for February, 1823, p. 94, &c. and March, 1823, p. 155, &c.

† See Biot *Recherches sur plusieurs points de l'Astronomie Egyptienne*.

and from the first, were tried, but with little success. One thing only was ascertained by this discussion—that it was no longer possible to believe in the extreme antiquity of these zodiacs. All the new systems agreed upon this point.* It was not long, however, before fresh resources presented themselves; and we can now speak with more certainty upon the subject.

Two learned men, both of deserved celebrity, though on different accounts, powerfully aided by the vast treasures with which the museums of Europe have been gradually enriched, have at last raised the veil, which concealed from us the history of these wonders of the ancient world. Certainly no one expected, that on the front of these ruined temples, erected,

* See the work of Biot above referred to; the *Notice sur le zodiaque de Dendéra*, par M. de S. Martin; the *Revue encyclopédique*, vol. xv. p. 232, &c.; the *Journal des Savans*, April and July, 1824, p. 236, &c. 402, &c.

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as it had been asserted, three thousand years before Jesus Christ—that under those mysterious paintings, which were supposed to be the depositories of the knowledge of the infant world, would be discovered the names of Ptolemy, of Cleopatra, or of Trajan. This, however, has been done. M. Letronne, by examining at once the construction of these monuments, and the Greek inscriptions which are found on some of them;* M. Champollion, the younger, by at length making himself acquainted with the import of the three classes of hieroglyphics with which they are covered,† have arrived at the same conclusion. It is remarkable, too, that at the same time artists have arrived at this conclusion, by

* *Recherches pour servir à l'histoire de l'Egypte pendant la domination des Grecs et des Romains.* See also *Journal des Savans*, April and June, 1823, p. 198, &c. 344, &c.

† *Précis du système hiéroglyphique des anciens Egyptiens.*

studying the sculpture and the architecture of the monuments in question.* At the same time, also, travellers undesignedly confirmed these discoveries, by the manuscripts and mummies which they brought to Europe.† And it was proved indisputably, in three or four different ways, that these too famous zodiacs, unworthy of the celebrity they have acquired, as well as the edifices, upon the ceilings of which they were painted,‡ were of later date than the time of Jesus Christ. The labours of M. Champollion have also proved, that those monuments

* M. M. Huyot and Gau. See Letronne *Recherches*, &c. Introduction, p. xxv.

† See Letronne. *Observations critiques et archéologiques sur les représentations zodiacales qui nous restent de l'antiquité*. See also the *Journal des Savans*, July, 1824, p. 398.

‡ It appears most probable, that these zodiacal paintings were on the subject of astrology, and that their use was introduced into Egypt under the emperors.

of Egypt, which were of real antiquity, did not exist prior to the Pharaohs of Exodus or of Genesis;* and that the profane documents which their hieroglyphics discover, in no respect contradict, but rather confirm the sacred records.

The question is now decided. The adversaries of Moses have made no reply to the positive assertions of his advocates, nor to the well-established facts, upon which those assertions rest: by their silence they have confessed the precipi-

* *Note by the Translator.*—According to Champollion (*Lettre II. a M. de Blacas*, p. 132), the most ancient monument now existing in Egypt, and capable of being referred to a determinate epoch, is a portion of an edifice, built by Osymandyas, and afterwards incorporated with the palace of Karnac, begun by Amenophis, after the expulsion of the shepherd kings. Osymandyas was either the last king of the 15th dynasty of Manetho, and reigned about 2300 B. C. or the first of the 16th, which began about 2272 B. C. (*Ibid.* p. 136.) The visit of Abraham to Egypt is commonly placed in the year 1920 B. C.

tancy of their judgments, and the incorrectness of their calculations. A victory such as this, should teach men who believe in the word of God, how little they have to fear from any similar attacks.

That we may be encouraged thus to hope, however, let it be well considered, that we must only ask of Moses what he can give, and professes to give. We must explain, therefore, what we call the Mosaic chronology. I do not understand, nor can any one conversant with these subjects understand, that it determines the period of the creation of man, or that of the deluge, without leaving an uncertainty as to some years, or even some centuries. It must be acknowledged, that Genesis cannot furnish matter for very accurate calculation. In the first place, instead of one calculation, the manuscripts or the ancient versions present us with the elements of two, or even three different ones; the results of

which differ from eight to nine centuries. We must make our choice from these three chronologies; or rather, as there is no certainty upon the subject, we must be content to acknowledge, that the Mosaic chronology does, in fact, leave to the epoch of the creation of man a latitude of nearly a thousand years. There is another circumstance, which tends still more to increase this uncertainty, and to widen this field of conjecture. The Mosaic chronology is no where distinctly laid down. Moses no where says—So many centuries elapsed between Adam and Noah, so many between Noah and the present time. These conclusions are derived from the genealogies contained in the Old Testament. And these genealogies, so far from being always susceptible of very exact computations, give rise, almost necessarily, to many subjects of doubt. I do not speak merely of those mistakes, which are so easily and frequently made

by copyists; when, instead of a sum total, they have to exhibit a great number of partial sums, generally expressed in cyphers, and not in words; nor of errors, almost inevitable, in the sums total, owing to the Oriental custom of giving, as entire, fractional numbers. But I would particularly notice the well-known habit of the Jews, of often suppressing some links in their genealogies—of representing the grandson as the immediate offspring of the grandfather. This they appear to have done, when the father had lived only for a short time, or had occupied a less distinguished place in their history; perhaps, even to give something more of symmetry and regularity to their genealogies. The certainty of their origin was all that they greatly concerned themselves about: the intermediate steps were of little importance. The genealogy of Jesus Christ, in the gospel of St. Matthew, would alone suffice, as an example and a proof of

what I have now advanced; but other genealogies, inserted twice in the Old Testament, and in different books, prove, by their differences, similar omissions. Unquestionably, the series of the patriarchs which the Pentateuch furnishes, with the age of each at the birth of the eldest son, and which are of greater antiquity and of more importance than the other genealogies in the sacred books, prove that more care was employed in fixing the time; but even here, it is not impossible that omissions of the same kind may have been made.

From these four considerations it appears, that while the genealogies of the Old Testament are faithful records of the existence of the persons whom they present to our notice, and of the order in which they lived, they do not form equally certain elements of an exact chronological calculation; a calculation, be it remembered, which is no where made by Moses himself, and which, in

all probability, he had no intention of giving. When, therefore, we defend the authority of the Mosaic chronology, we simply affirm, that in general it is more correct than those profane chronologies to which it is opposed; that the only errors which it allows us to suspect, are very limited, and not capable of extending, for example, to some thousand years. With this qualification, the Mosaic chronology triumphs over all objections. Every scientific discovery—every well-directed effort, with respect to this subject, instead of destroying, confirms it; and, I will venture to say, will continue to confirm it.

One reflection more may find a place in this chapter. At the close of the last century, the book of Genesis, as well as all the other books of the Old Testament, was attacked with violence. It was described as the work of ignorance. Science and nature, it was affirmed, contradicted it in every page. What

region was left unexplored—what expedient untried, to obtain arguments against it? To what systems did men not consent to have recourse, to prove its falsehood? It would appear, from their representations, that only the dullest ignorance could give credit to it. The very period when this disposition appeared generally to prevail, was that at which the sciences had made the greatest progress. The very men, who, while they burst from the darkness of superstition, at the same time rejected the light of revelation, zealously devoted their learning and their talents to the study of nature, of mathematics, or of antiquity. All the sciences, in concert, made prodigious advances; and the twenty-five first years of the nineteenth century, will always be a glorious period for the progress of the human mind, whatever may be the attainments of succeeding times. Under the circumstances to which I have adverted,—the learned being so little

disposed to believe in the records of Genesis, so eager to discover errors in it, and at the same time possessed of such ample means of detecting errors, if errors there were,—could this book, if it had been really the work of imposture, have survived this crisis? Its mistakes and its falsehoods must have been revealed. Quite the reverse of this has happened. New discoveries, so far from destroying its tottering authority, have respected it—have restored it. We may now venture to acknowledge and to defend it, without the hazard of being erased from the catalogue of enlightened men. Its enemies have encountered resistance. They have been attacked, in their turn, on their own ground: they have been routed, and they retire disarmed. Shall not this result, then, apparently so little to be expected, speak to the judgment of every impartial man who is the witness of it?

Some reader may, perhaps, think that this result is to be attributed to the desire of obtaining favours with a certain government, or a certain monarch, whose religious opinions are very decisively declared. To this I reply, that my observation extends, not merely to five or to six years, but to fifteen or twenty; not to the learned of one country only, but to the learned throughout Europe; not to the silence of the enemies of the Bible, but to their defeat; not, in short, to declared opinions, but to discoveries and to facts. The nature of the hieroglyphical alphabet—the names which, with its assistance, have been decyphered on the Egyptian temples, are facts as independent of the influence of power, as the plate of gold recently discovered in the foundations of one of these temples, which was pretended to have been prior to Moses,* with a Greek inscription, in which the names of

* Letronne, *Recherches*, &c. p. 7.

Ptolemy and Berenice occur; or still more, as the zodiac, bearing the date of the nineteenth year of the reign of Trajan, brought from Egypt by M. Cailliaud.* It is possible, no doubt, that some distinguished writers may have undertaken the defence of Genesis, for the sake of ingratiating themselves with the ruling powers; but it is not considered, I imagine, that the adversaries of this book have carried their complaisance so far, as quietly to submit to the unjust imputation of error.†

* Letronne, *Observations critiques et archéologiques*, &c. p. 22.

† How, for instance, is it possible not to remark the silence of a man so learned as M. Fourier? This celebrated mathematician,—a veteran in the expedition to Egypt, and perpetual Secretary to the Academy of Sciences,—is the author of the calculations, upon which the antiquity of the zodiacs depends. Notwithstanding, in the midst of multiplied and decisive objections, which combat and destroy this alleged antiquity, he has written nothing in defence of it.

In conclusion, I beg to offer a translation of a few lines from Eichhorn, on the same subject. I cite this writer, who is, on this point, an unexceptionable witness, with pleasure; because, though he is the admirer of Moses, he has never considered him any thing more than an able man and a skilful historian.

“The history which these books (the Pentateuch) contain, has nothing to fear from the most rigorous examination. The most determined enemies of Moses have not succeeded in raising objections, over which his book has not triumphed. The truth which they hoped to obscure, they have rather encompassed with fresh splendour. Can we avoid being astonished, when we see the most ancient historical work confirmed by every new discovery in the literature, in the geography, or in the natural history of the East? How remarkably do all these things concur to illustrate it! In comparison with the important

light which has been thrown upon almost the whole of this book, the few passages which the veil of antiquity still covers are of trifling moment. The time, doubtless, will come, when this will be drawn aside, by men of another age, as we of the present age have removed those which embarrassed our predecessors."*

* Eichhorn *Einleitung in das A. T.* § 442. 3d edit.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

POSTERIOR TO THE PENTATEUCH.

I proceed to make some additions to the remarks I was able to offer pp. 20, 21, and suggest, at least, some additional ideas.

I ought first to observe, that I now speak only of the authenticity and of the credibility of the sacred books. I examine them only as ordinary works. The question of their divine origin will come to be discussed in the illustrations which I shall offer of the second part of my discourse.

In this chapter I propose three things:—first, to show the connexion which necessarily subsists between the Pentateuch and the other books of the Old Testament; secondly, to examine these

books independently; thirdly, to consider the historical testimony upon which their authority rests.

I. In admitting the authenticity of the Pentateuch, we admit the foundation of the Jewish history. Moses was the writer of the five books which bear his name. Therefore he was the legislator of the Hebrews: therefore that nation was for some centuries in possession of those institutions which it received from him; of that country and political existence which it owed to him; having, consequently, its successes and its reverses, its wars and its revolutions, in a word, its history. The nation, then, in all probability, must have had historians. The people would, moreover, necessarily sometimes obey—sometimes violate the precepts of the founder. In either case, these precepts must have been the object of certain studies—of certain labours, designed to illustrate them, to explain them; or, perhaps, to

recal them to the minds of the faithless people, and to restore to them the empire which never could be lost. Religious, Doctrinal, Poetical, Rhetorical Books, would probably obtain a place in the sacred literature of the Hebrews, among the writings which were the guides of their conduct and the sources of their faith. These works must exist somewhere. We may expect to find them following those of Moses, or in the archives of the nation. Why, then, should we feel suspicious of those books with which we are presented, as long as examination has not led us to reject them?

The nature of the Mosaic constitution gives additional strength to our reasonings. That constitution was altogether of a religious nature. The head of the state was the Deity—the law of the state was religion. Political force is identical with religious force: their object is the same—their effect is the same. The

legislator has combined these two principles, and those who administer the law cannot separate them. Their religious books will, consequently, be more or less of a political nature; and their political histories, will be religious records. Hence, on the one hand, the political histories will be the more carefully preserved, as sacred writings; and on the other, the religious books, often originating in circumstances of a political nature, and in the state of society, will be more numerous and more frequent. It would, then, be truly inconceivable, that the writings of Moses only should have reached our times. If we were no where to meet with books which would serve as a commentary on the Pentateuch, it would be a phenomenon, of which it would be necessary to seek an explanation.

The books with which we are furnished, for the illustration and the history of the Pentateuch, have nothing of a suspicious

nature in them. They are altogether such as we should have expected them to be. In the first place, they completely and clearly accord with their grand model. At one time they suppose it; at another, they imitate it; at another, they illustrate it. The historians cite the laws of Moses, or make indirect allusions to them; the prophets make use of the same expressions and images: all of them make it the substance of their writings, and often they borrow its form. This imitation, however, is never so servile, so uniform, as to awaken suspicion. Independence and variety are always observed. These books are just what books, written some centuries after Moses, should be. The historians sometimes, without appearing to remark it themselves, show us the law, at one time obeyed—at another, forgotten; and then again put in force, by some pious monarch. The prophetic or moral writers illustrate it, and explain it by their own

precepts, and show that sometimes they have understood the sense and the spirit of it: sometimes, too, they show that it was altered and perverted. In a word, the harmony which subsists between the other books of the Old Testament and the Pentateuch, has all the air of probability and nature.

II.* In order to judge better of these books, let us examine their nature and their classification, independently of their relation to the Pentateuch. From this

* This seems to be the proper place for noticing some attacks which have been made upon these books, in a work which has recently appeared, calculated to make a considerable sensation. (*De la religion, considérée dans sa source, ses formes et ses développemens, par M. Benjamin Constant.*) Together with some remarkable acknowledgments and great truths, nobly expressed, the author (chiefly in two chapters of his second volume, p. 198—251.) throws out many ideas, which appear to me very incorrect, often contradicted by facts, and impossible to be reconciled with the inspiration, under the influence of which he

those general characters which are common to several of them. They may

reference to the sacerdotal laws. Samuel was a stranger to the priesthood—to that body, which has been made a complete scape-goat, and of which, I am far from being an apologist; but which has, nevertheless, the right of every one that is accused—the right to an impartial judgment. In p. 199, M. B. Constant says, that “military chiefs, incorrectly called judges, rank immediately after the high priest.” It would be difficult to substantiate this assertion by facts; and I confess I know not where the author can have discovered them. What I do know is, that there is no allusion to the high priest, or to the priesthood, in the book of Judges, except it be in an appendix, of a much later date than the rest of the book, where the ark and the high priest are incidentally mentioned (Judges xx. 27, 28), and without any connexion with the judges. At this very period, there was indeed no judge in Israel. (Judges xix. 1.) The book of Judges, however, though it contains the religious, no less than the political history of the Jews, is so silent on the subject of the priesthood, that we might doubt almost whether it existed. We perceive no traces of its existence, except at the birth of

be divided into historical, prophetical, and moral or didactic works.

Samuel, when the sacred writer relates domestic and familiar scenes. It is there only that we hear of the tabernacle—that we see the priests. M. B. Constant is not more correct, when he endeavours to find in the establishment of a monarchy an encroachment on the sacerdotal authority, where nothing is hinted at, but the desire of being rid of civil tyrants and iniquitous judges (1 Sam. viii. 1—5.), when he gives us the history of pretended struggles between the monarch and the priests—when he transforms into priests those who were their victims, Jeremiah and Uriah, &c. (p. 206.) It must be acknowledged, that his hypothesis wears more the air of probability, when he applies it to the mutual relations between Samuel and Saul. Even there, however, far from proving any thing, he cannot, with any certainty, arrive at his conclusions, except by denying many facts, and substituting in their place circumstances, upon which the history is altogether silent.

It is to be lamented, that a man who writes and thinks like M. B. Constant, should not have employed, on this work, more accuracy and more research. It appears to me, that we had a right to expect this, before a man pronounced so severe

1. *Historical*.—These books are decidedly extracts from contemporary annals.

a censure upon books which are held in reverence by all Christians. God forbid, however, that in making these strictures, I should forget to do justice to the noble truths which this work contains. Others will, perhaps, pass on it a harsher judgment than I have done; but never will I allow myself to brand with the name of unbeliever, a man, who proclaims the necessity of religion, who attacks its enemies, who acknowledges the divine mission of Moses and of Jesus Christ, who labours to awaken a sense of religion, and who commits to her keeping civilization and liberty. I lament that he has not perceived the necessity of a more decided, and therefore more efficacious faith; that he has left undetermined the sentiments and the opinions, which should be the support of man in affliction, in danger, and in death: but I applaud the courage with which, in a service more sacred and more interesting, he at once attacks the wretched scepticism of the school of Voltaire; the materialism of the followers of Condillac; the selfish morality of the disciples of Helvetius; the absurd systems of Dupuis; the ambition of the priests, that poison of genuine religion. I thank him for the elevated ideas which are

They are not these annals themselves; because many things could not have

awakened by his eloquent defence of the religious sentiment. With pleasure I reflect, that his book will be the instrument of good, perhaps of greater good than the author himself contemplated, and that, too, in a different way. His objections to the dignity of the Old Testament, I repeat, appear to me weak, and do not shake my faith: but the work which contains them has, on the other hand, contributed, in some instances, to strengthen my faith; and that, too, in a manner which could have made no part of the writer's design. The more talent he has displayed in describing the excesses of the priests, the more conspicuously, strange as it may seem, has the divine character of the Mosaic law appeared, of a theocracy, under which these abuses were so carefully, so wisely prohibited. So, in his first volume, the more eloquently M. B. Constant proves the existence of an innate sense of religion, the more evident appears to me the necessity of a revelation which shall correspond with that sense, for a world of uncertainty, that has been created, however, by a wise and good God. As in the human body, the mere existence of the lungs demonstrates that of the external atmosphere.

been described, till long after they took place. Although they bear the names of Joshua, of Judges, or of Samuel, they are not the works of these individuals, nor do they pretend to be so: they have only received the names of those, of whose lives and actions they give an account. All this is unquestionable; but what is not less so, is, that in all ages the contemporary history was written by prophets, and that from this source the books in our possession are derived. The proofs, in detail, would lead us too far from our purpose: but let any one read these writings; and in the air of simplicity and antiquity by which they are distinguished; in the minute particulars which they relate; in the liveliness of the narratives; in the natural descriptions which abound in them, he will very soon recognize the inimitable touch peculiar to contemporaneous writers of the facts which they relate.

These writings, besides, have a religious character, which does not permit us to ascribe them to ordinary historians. It is the history of their religion with which they present us, rather than that of the people: this seems altogether their end and aim. Nor are they the historians of the court. The writers are the heralds of religion, or the books are inexplicable.*

One singular circumstance which characterizes these writings, and distinguishes them from all national histories that have been or will be written, is, that so far from flattering the pride of the Hebrew

* These heralds of religion are, be it remembered, prophets, and not priests. This is positively asserted of several of them; but had it been nowhere mentioned, it would not have been the less evident. The interests of religion, of virtue, and not those of the priesthood, are there defended. Public manners are often discussed: the priests are seldom mentioned. Their errors and want of fidelity are there related, without disguise, as well as those of the kings and of the people.

people, these books, so highly revered by the people, and so carefully preserved by them, as the titles of their honour, are, nevertheless, the monuments of their disgrace. In every page we see the nation, the kings, the priests—guilty, convicted, and punished. The charges of stupidity, ingratitude, impiety, perjury, violence, deceit, are repeated again and again. Had not these books been the work of conscientious prophets, raised, by their office, above human passions and interests, they would, doubtless, have administered other food to the national pride; and the historians would have taken surer means of conciliating the affections of the people, and ingratiating themselves with men in power. And had not the people known and venerated these historians; had they had the slightest reason to doubt the authenticity of their works, the national pride would have promptly detected and exposed the falsehood.

In the last place, a remarkable diversity of language and of style prevails among these writers: it extends even to their orthography. The difference of situation, and the progress of manners, are indicated by shades as fine as they are true. The method, the expressions, and the language of the books of Samuel, are very different from those of the books of Ezra, of Nehemiah, and of Esther. As the history gradually unrolls itself, and ages fly away, the images are less lively, the language less pure, the style less original, and the influence of an intercourse with foreigners on the manner of writing becomes more evident.

These four reflections alone, it appears to me, present us with proofs, singularly strong, in favour of the authenticity of the historical books.

2. *Prophetic Writings*.—The three latter remarks upon the historical books apply, in a still stronger degree, to the prophecies. I will only add, that the

authenticity of these is proved by the citations and mutual imitations in which they abound. The more modern prophets cite the more ancient, and repeat their predictions: the historians describe their ministry, their sufferings, their success. Isaiah, Amos, Joel, Hosea appeared in the commencement of the age of prophecy; their imagination is ardent; their language original; their poetry is the offspring of a double inspiration—of genius and of the Holy Spirit. In a later age, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, Zechariah, and others, are their imitators; not, indeed, in their subjects,—for their mission was almost always of a special nature,—but in the form in which the prophecies are embodied: they borrow the phraseology and the images of their predecessors; in some instances, we can perceive what prophet was their model; or, rather, that revered model, having been itself incorporated with the language, has changed its form, and brought

about a new epoch in its history. As was affirmed of the historical books of the Old Testament—the prophetic books cannot but be authentic.

3. *Moral and Didactic Writings.*—This third class of writings has not, and could not, have in its favour the same proofs of authenticity. They do not occupy so important a place in the old revelation, as those we have already noticed; and, above all, they were not calculated to produce the same effects on the Jewish people. We do not find in them laws framed for the nation—censures, promises, threatenings, which regarded the people generally. We do not find political and national records; but maxims, prayers, moral precepts, the raptures of a pious mind, or the reflections of an inspired sage. They may be called private writings, unquestionably useful in a religious point of view; but which, politically considered, might be dispensed with. Hence it will be easily understood,

that they were less read than the others in the synagogues; less frequently transcribed by the copyists, or quoted by subsequent writers. Yet there is one of these books, which, notwithstanding this distinction, has been known, circulated, and cited as much, perhaps, as any other book in the Old Testament. I allude to the Psalms: a treasure as various as it is inexhaustible, of pious sentiments, of poetical descriptions, of eloquent lessons, and even of inspired prophecies. Truly it is not ourselves, to whom this portion of the Old Testament can appear the least important and least interesting. This precious collection, or, rather, this assemblage of different and successive collections, of the hymns of several prophets, but chiefly of the songs of a monarch, who was a man after God's own heart, carries with it the seal of its authenticity. How is it possible to believe that these poems, of such variety, truth, and simplicity, and in number one

hundred and fifty, could have been invented at pleasure. Who could have been the author of such an imposture? What could have been his object? Hence this book, the most important of the whole class, has sometimes given its name to them all, and was probably so used by Jesus Christ, when he said,—*the things which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.**

Job and the writings of Solomon do not occupy so important a place in the Jewish dispensation as the Psalms. The authenticity of both, however, is supported, first, by the originality of the style—the independent and strongly marked character by which they are distinguished; secondly, by the language itself in which they are written, and which ceased to be in use after, and even during the captivity; thirdly, by numerous internal marks, which it is

* Luke xxiv. 44.

impossible here to particularize; and lastly, by the universal testimony borne by the Jewish, as well as the Christian church, to the *canon** of the Old Testament—to that collection, definitively settled shortly after the captivity, and in which these writings have uniformly been found. But this must be the subject of distinct consideration.

III. The authenticity of the Old Testament rests upon the authority of competent judges,—that of the ancient Jews and of the early Christians; on an authority of still greater weight,—that of Jesus Christ and the apostles. Both received the Old Testament as inspired; and it was at that time composed of the very same books which we receive at this day. It would lead me into particulars too scientific for this work, were I to enter more at large upon this

* This word signifies a *rule*; and denotes the *regular* and official collection of sacred writings.

subject.* I will only add a few remarks on the testimony borne to the canon of the Old Testament, by the Jewish colonies established in China and the Indies, about the Christian era, or perhaps several centuries before. The proof which they furnish is not decisive, since they held some degree of intercourse with the Western Jews. It is not, however, without weight; for they all declare, that they carried with them, and have preserved in precious manuscripts, the same holy books which they subsequently found in the hands of their European brethren. And there appears no reason to doubt this assertion.

* If any of my readers should be desirous of acquainting themselves with these proofs, and would not be deterred by the somewhat dry discussions which they require, I would refer them to an extract from the *Introduction à l'Ancien Testament*, by Eichhorn, contained in the *Mélanges de religion*, lately published at Nismes, by M. Vincent, pastor. (April, 1824, vol. ix. pp. 181—201.)

What I have to say respecting the Jews of China, I borrow from Eichhorn. He himself is indebted for it to the *Histoire des Huns*, by De Guignes, and to the *Recueil des missions étrangères*.

In the last century, the remains of a Jewish colony were discovered in China; the establishment of which, in that empire, may be traced to the year 73 after Jesus Christ, and perhaps even three centuries earlier. Seven hundred families, of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, escaping from Jerusalem, at the time of its destruction by Titus Vespasian, reached China by land, and there either founded or increased the colony in question. Seventeen hundred years of persecution, of massacres, or of apostacy, have reduced them to a very small number. They are now, to the number of six hundred souls, only to be met with at Caifongfu, about one hundred and fifty miles from Pekin. They had carried with them the Old Testament;

and during eleven centuries retained possession of it. At that period, their synagogue and their manuscripts were destroyed by fire. They supplied their loss by a manuscript of the Pentateuch, which had been the property of a Jew who died at Canton. Not only the synagogue, but individuals were in possession of copies of this manuscript. It is very remarkable and important for us to notice, that besides the Pentateuch, they preserve different portions of the rest of the Old Testament, which they affirm were saved from the conflagration of the 12th century, and from an inundation of the river Hoango, in the year 1446. From these fragments they form a supplement to the law, divided into two parts. The first contains portions of the books of Joshua and Judges, the four books entire of Samuel and Kings, and the book of Psalms. The second part contains parts of the Chronicles and Nehemiah, and Esther almost entire,

Isaiah and Jeremiah, very nearly complete, some fragments of Daniel and of seven of the minor prophets.

Dr. Buchanan, in 1807 and 1808, visited several Jewish colonies in India; and a similar, though less conclusive and less curious, testimony is borne by them also.* Near Cochin, on the coast of Malabar, he found a colony of Jews, called the *White Jews*, in opposition to the *Black Jews*, of whom I shall have to speak presently. I subjoin their own account of their origin, which is confirmed by the ancient annals of Malabar, and by the more modern annals of the Mussulmans.

They declare that their fathers left Jerusalem, after the destruction of the second temple, and went to India, with their children, their wives, their doctors, and their priests. A king of India gave them the city of Cranganor for a residence, and secured to them many privileges, in

* *Christian Researches in Asia*. London, 1812.

the year of the world 4250, 490 after Jesus Christ. In testimony of this fact, they preserve and exhibit to strangers a tablet of copper, covered with the ancient characters of Malabar, together with a translation in Hebrew of these inscriptions. In this is contained the charter which was granted them by the king of Malabar, and which bears the signatures of seven other neighbouring kings. The Hebrew translation, though not very intelligible even to themselves, appears, however, to confirm this account. Shortly after their establishment in the country, other Jews, who had escaped from Jerusalem, rejoined them; and subsequently, more of their countrymen, who had heard of their prosperity, arrived among them from Spain and other countries. But in consequence of some internal dissensions, they became the prey of an Indian king, who laid waste Cranganor, and massacred or led captive its wretched inhabitants. A very small number, however, succeeded in

saving themselves in the city of Cochin, near which Dr. Buchanan found them. In almost every family he met with a Hebrew Bible, either of the printed editions of the West, or in manuscripts of no great antiquity. The manuscripts, they said, it was their custom to burn when they became old. Their testimony in favour of the canon of the Old Testament is reduced, therefore, to the tradition which they received from their fathers, and to the conviction that their fathers always admitted and revered the same books. This tradition is, moreover, confirmed by a very simple remark. If, in the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles, there had been any disagreement, or any difference of opinion, respecting the books of the Old Law, it is not easy to understand why there should be no historical trace of it—why, moreover, the Jews of India, for example, or of any other ancient church, should alike have unhesitatingly received the same canon from the hands of the Western

Jews. How, upon this hypothesis, is it possible to explain that no one isolated church should have adhered to a certain particular variation in the old collection, and should not have protested against the admission of certain books, which were rejected by their fathers? They who are acquainted with the canon of the New Testament, will easily find in it the proof of what I have now advanced.

Dr. Buchanan also found in India another Jewish family, called the *Black Jews*, more remarkable still, in some respects. The black Jews are much less familiar with the Jewish traditions, and have fewer Bibles: they form a race less pure, mixed with Hindoo blood, and probably alloyed by a connexion with the remnants of the ten tribes: they are regarded by the white Jews with contempt, as of an inferior caste. But on the other hand, they are much more numerous; dispersed in many cities; perhaps more

early established in India; and they are in possession of ancient and valuable manuscripts. They bear testimony to the canon, in rejecting none of the books of which it is composed, though they rarely possess the whole of the Old Testament. Those of them who reside near the white Jews, sedulously avail themselves of the opportunity of supplying their deficiencies. Dr. Buchanan, in several cities, purchased from them a number of manuscripts: and among them, a roll of skin, forty-eight feet in length, on which was written the whole of the Pentateuch. Mr. Yeate, of Cambridge, has carefully collated it; and it was said, a printed impression of it was likely to appear. The celebrated Marsh, Bishop of Peterborough, was expected to add some valuable information on the age, the character, and the importance of the manuscript.

CHAPTER VI.

PROOFS OF THE INTEGRITY* OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT.

Proofs of this integrity have already been given, in what I have said, pp. 12—14, respecting the Samaritan Pentateuch, and in the circumstances which I have just related, in reference to the Jewish churches dispersed through Asia, from the Christian era. The Samaritan Pentateuch flows from a special source: it gives us the text, which, at the time of the schism, was in the hands of the ten tribes. The manuscripts of this Pentateuch have been carefully collated: they give us, with very trifling variations, the same text as the Hebrew. Can any demonstration be more complete?

* i. e. The preservation of these books from any important alterations.

With respect to the Jews of China and Malabar, the proof which they afford is not so strong, because their manuscripts have been less carefully examined; and because their synagogues have not, like those of Samaria, been excluded, for a thousand years, from all intercourse with the Jews of Europe. Nevertheless, if they do not furnish us with a decisive argument in favour of the integrity of the Old Testament, they do offer a very striking presumption.

We have yet more direct arguments to employ; but they would require scientific illustrations, which it would be foreign to the purpose of this work to introduce. I will limit myself to the two proofs to which I adverted in p. 21, viz. the various ancient versions which have been made of the Old Testament; and the care with which the Jews preserved and transmitted it to posterity. These proofs are remarkable; because, independently of the integrity

of the Old Testament, they show the special protection which the Deity has exercised towards it. It was the will of God, not only that those oracles, which were preparatory to Christ's coming, should reach us in their purity, but that we should have no reason to doubt of their antiquity, and consequently of their divine origin. It was his will, that seeing him, as it were, watching over their preservation, we, like the Jews, should be led to receive them as immediately from his hands, notwithstanding the distance of age and country.

I. The Old Testament has been translated into a great number of languages: but the only versions of which I shall here speak, are those which were made before or about the time of the Christian era. At that period, almost all the books of the Old Law had been translated into Chaldee, for the use of the Jews in the East, with whom the original Hebrew was no longer a living language.

The Old Testament had been translated into Greek, for the use of the Jewish church of Alexandria, who were still less acquainted with the Hebrew. It was subsequently translated into Syriac, for the Christians of Edessa and Nisibis. These three versions have been preserved: we are in possession of numerous copies and editions; and with the exception of a few unimportant differences, they give us the same text, the same books, the same prophecies, and the same phrases. This agreement, however, does not arise from any design on the part of the translators, or from any fraud on the part of the learned. The three sister versions, having once sprung from their common mother, have been for ever separated by events, and by a rivalry which still subsists. The Chaldee version, which was carefully preserved and consulted by the Hebrews, was unknown to the Christians during the first ages of the church, and has been in their hands

only between two and three centuries. The Christians of Syria know no more of the Greek version, than the Greeks know of the Syriac. The Greek version, which was circulated throughout the West, and translated into Latin, and which, under this form, became the object of exclusive reverence in the Romish church, could not borrow from the other versions, of the existence even of which the Western nations were entirely ignorant. The agreement of these three witnesses, therefore, is so much the more remarkable, because their language was at all times mutually unintelligible; and because these versions were the property of rival churches, and hostile forms of faith, and were the work of inveterate enemies, of Christians and of Jews—of Christians of the East and Christians of the West, of Jews of Palestine and Jews of Alexandria. Notwithstanding all this, they do agree. They give us, therefore, with certainty, the ancient and true text of the Old

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Testament, as it existed before the appearance of Jesus Christ.

II. Of these three versions, the Greek (known by the name of the Septuagint version,) was for a long time almost exclusively in use among Christians. It was ranked by the faithful of Constantinople and of Egypt, even above the original Hebrew; of the very existence of which, they were almost ignorant. In its Latin form, and under the name of the Vulgate, it held undivided sway in the Western church.* If

* *Note by the Translator.*—The old Latin version of the Scriptures, in common use before the time of Jerom, was certainly a translation from the Septuagint, and was executed in the early part of the second century; but the version now known by the name of the Vulgate, and which, in the seventh century, came to be universally employed in the Western church, was, so far as much the greater part of the Old Testament is concerned, a translation from the original Hebrew, by Jerom, and was finished by him, A. D. 405. The New Testament he did not translate from the original, but merely revised the old Latin version of it which he found in use.

during the time that this version alone was known, from the Nile to the Thames, and from the shores of the Euxine Sea to the banks of the Tagus, the Hebrew text and the Chaldee version, with which the Christians were unacquainted, and of which the Jews knew scarcely more, had been lost, what would have been the consequence to our religion? The authenticity of the oracles upon which Christianity rests its claims, would have had no other witnesses in its favour but the Christians themselves, who would have been regarded as partial judges, and as unworthy of credit; and that scepticism, which eagerly discovers objections, would one day have accused them of having themselves invented the ancient prophecies, of which their religion boasted—prophecies, which fifteen centuries of ignorance and dissension might have given them the desire, the necessity, and the opportunity of inventing. This

objection would undoubtedly have been a weighty one; but the Deity himself provided against it. During these fifteen centuries to which I have alluded, the Jews preserved the Hebrew code; and when the period fixed on by Providence had arrived, they permitted the Christians to peruse it, while they abandoned not the charge of it. And Christians there discovered powerful weapons, which borrowed additional strength from the hands in which they had been deposited—the same prophecies, which, for fifteen centuries, they had revered, and some still clearer and more decisive. For fifteen centuries, the Jews alone studied the Hebrew text. They copied it, analyzed it, and at last printed it. They watched over this precious charge with obstinate pertinacity—with the passion of a miser, who guards his treasures. The following information may be taken as a proof of this:—From the third to the eleventh century, two Jewish schools,

which were established at Babylon and Tiberias, were unceasingly occupied on the Hebrew Scriptures; not only on their interpretation and their precepts, but on their form—on the words and letters of which they were composed. During eight hundred years, many and celebrated learned men were employed in these two schools, and devoted all their lives to the enumeration and description of these letters and words: they distinguished and numbered the consonants, the vowels, and the accents: they repeated, in every possible way, their minute and insignificant calculations. These calculations are still extant; and whoever should be at the trouble of verifying them, would probably find mathematical proof of the integrity of the Hebrew text. This undertaking, I doubt not, makes my readers smile. Let us not, however, forget, that though this magnificent trifling of the ancient rabbins, was perfectly useless to their

own age and their own church, it was designed by the Deity as a proof, to our age and church, of the vigilant, but mechanical fidelity, with which they preserved the integrity of the Old Testament. Who would now dare to doubt of the authenticity of prophecies, of which such men have been ever the guardians? Who would dare to suppose that they have falsified that book, the least *iotas* of which they seem to have revered; and that they have falsified it, in opposition to their own interest, in favour of those Christians who persecuted them, and whom they hate? No: the Deity has provided, that no man of sense can even believe such a falsification possible.

CHAPTER VII.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUE GOD AMONG THE
JEWISH PEOPLE, COMPARED WITH
THE NOTIONS OF PAGAN PHILOSOPHERS.

Few things make us more sensible of the weakness of unaided human reason, and of the necessity of admitting the interposition of the Deity in the Jewish religion, than the contrast to which I have adverted in p. 24. We are amazed at finding among the Hebrews ideas of the Deity, so just and so grand; and among the pagan philosophers, in their most celebrated schools, and at periods when the human mind showed most vigour, conceptions so imperfect and so erroneous. My readers will, I persuade myself, pardon my entering a little more at large upon this subject, when they consider its extreme import-

ance. The points of comparison to which I shall attend, shall be taken among men and in ages of the most celebrity—among the Greeks, from Thales to Zeno. It is in all the splendour of its glory, that I would here examine the unaided wisdom of man. I shall speak only of those men who were preeminently distinguished by their study of natural theology and philosophy, and who, at first sight, seem to disprove my assertion. The argument thus conducted will be more triumphant.

The sages of the Ionian school were the first who reasoned with some degree of weight on nature and on the divinity. Their imperfect reasonings, however, led them to a mixture of atheism and of pantheism*—a fearful presage for their successors in the career which they had just opened. In the midst of the darkness in which they disputed, we perceive,

* Pantheism is the opinion of those who confound the universe with the Deity.

however, some doubtful light, which would seem to announce the approach of day. Anaxagoras, a man illustrious for talent and for virtue, of himself discovered the idea of the true God. "He was the first who understood clearly, and distinctly declared, that the phenomena of the world were strictly connected with each other; that they formed a complete whole; that order was the grand chain which united the several parts—the supreme law to which they were in subjection; that this universal system, in the unity by which it is distinguished, supposes a single ruler, and consequently, an intelligence which is acquainted with it, which arranges it, and realizes it."* This brilliant vision, however, like a meteor of the night, vanished immediately, and rendered the darkness, which it had for a moment dissipated, still more dense. It was

* Degerando *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie*. 2nd edit. Vol. i. p. 360.

only an isolated phenomenon, to be attributed to a fortunate chance, but which had no influence on the progress of the human mind. The successors of Anaxagoras were unable to retain and preserve the truth, which for a moment he had discovered; and philosophy, under their auspices, again sunk into the gross conceptions of their age and their school; with such difficulty could the unassisted reason of man raise itself to the true God.

The Pythagoreans entered on a new field; but all the aid of unwearied constancy, united to an elevated imagination and to profound study, could not save this school from the grand mistake upon which all their philosophy depended. "They elevated themselves to that fair and majestic image of the universe, which became the chief and worthy object of their contemplations. . . . Contemplating nature under such an aspect, they ought naturally to have

been led to form just and exalted conceptions of the First Cause. Those conceptions, however, which are attributed to the early Pythagoreans, do not entirely agree with this expectation. They approached the idea of an overruling Intelligence; but at the conclusions to which this should have led them, they did not arrive, like Anaxagoras. It seems, they thought they had explained every thing by the properties of numbers, and that having established laws, they did not feel the need of causes The notion of a Deity was still connected by them with a *place*, nor was it freed from material images They admired the old tradition of the soul of the world, and conceived of the universe as a living and animated being.”*

The school of Elea is next in succession. Here we find more independent, more real and profound thinkers. They advance a step farther than any of their

* Degerando, pp. 414, 415.

predecessors: they inquire how and why any thing exists. But soon, as a penalty for not having rightly estimated the strength of their reason, losing their way in these labyrinths, their sight is confused, their steps totter, they affirm that nothing exists but in appearance. Xenophanes, their teacher, acknowledges the existence of God; but denies that he has the power of communicating existence, or that he has ever created any thing at all. The genius of this philosopher was absorbed and lost in the floods of a fathomless and shoreless idealism. He himself was the first wretched victim of this monstrous error: the whole complexion of his life was changed; he saw about him only falsehood, shadow, and nonentity; he died in the anguish of that universal doubt, which his own heart denied, but with which his vain reasonings encompassed and oppressed him.

Soon after, however, appeared a sage,

more remarkable, and perhaps more worthy of the admiration and love of man, than the world has ever seen. Socrates placed natural religion on its proper basis. He defended moral truth: he taught the immortality of the soul, and future retribution. He was the first, who, instead of confining his doctrines to chosen disciples, extended his lessons to a larger number of his countrymen; because he was the first who recognized in wisdom, only a means of being useful, and who was attached to this noble cause, even to the sacrifice of life itself. He appeared at a time when eloquence, politics, morals, and philosophy were alike corrupt; and he undertook at once to reform them all. But I again cite the writer to whom I have before referred. "What, then, is he who arose, and ventured to devote himself for this great work? Is he a powerful man, who disposes of the influence which is

attached to power, to fortune, to authority? Does he occupy the place of a magistrate in the republic? Is he seconded by numerous and powerful friends? Is he encompassed by a retinue, which gives him consequence? Does he surpass his opponents in eloquence?.... No: he is a humble and a poor man, of obscure origin; he stands alone; he has no other influence, but that of genius; no other authority, but that which belongs to his character. All his power is in his virtue; for his knowledge and his genius itself are no other than his virtue ... Philosophy had been corrupted It was necessary that an agent worthy of herself should be found—an agent, whose words should be dictated by a love of man and a love of truth Such an agent was Socrates His actions were to be, in all respects, a confirmation of his maxims; he was to be, in every thing, consistent with himself. The

greatest of sacrifices he was to affix, the last seal, on himself. The sage who undertook this reformation, must be ready to yield himself a voluntary victim. The life and death of Socrates were necessary for this purpose.*

Providence, in sending this remarkable man into the world, had doubtless some great object in view. Perhaps he designed to open the hearts of men to the love of virtue, by showing it to them personified in human features, as simple as they were affecting. Perhaps he saw good to teach men what is the true character of wisdom; to show its lofty, yet simple dignity; to show them to what height man can raise himself by her means, when united with disinterested virtue. Perhaps he designed to give to the heathen world, by anticipation, a brilliant, though imperfect, sketch of that celestial Being, who should one day, like Socrates, teach virtue, live in

* Degerando, vol. ii. pp. 124—126.

poverty, and die by the hands of the executioner, for the happiness of mankind; but who would be as superior to the sage of Athens, in his doctrine, in his life, and in his death, as in his nature and his power. Socrates, alas! though so noble a man—though he seemed to have received a divine call, and thought that he was favoured with supernatural assistance, did not, however, reform his age or his countrymen. Like Anaxagoras, he passed away, better understood, no doubt, by some, and leaving his doctrine to disciples more worthy of him: nevertheless, he produced much less effect, and was much less useful, than so much greatness and so much virtue seemed to promise. His history proves, at least to every impartial and reflecting man, the insufficiency of philosophy to enlighten mankind and to perpetuate the knowledge of truth. Socrates, alas! was so far from attaining this object, that he declined to acknowledge, in the presence of his judges, the

only Sovereign of the universe, or he did not think it useful to do so. This great man, at his death, seemed even, in some measure, to countenance the idea of those false deities, which had disgraced his country, and in whose honour his blood was about to be shed. Besides, however great this prince of sages may appear to us, when we consider him in connexion with his own age and his own rivals, if we consider him apart from these, and compare him with that high standard of absolute perfection and complete truth, of which the world was in need, we shall be forced to acknowledge, that his life was not free from blemishes, nor his theology from errors, nor his faith from hesitation, nor even his martyrdom from some degree of dissembling.

His disciples preserved the recollection of his lessons; and appeared, for some time, to entertain less unworthy notions of the Deity than the rest of the

heathens. As Socrates was the most distinguished amongst the heathens for his virtue, so Plato was the most distinguished for the splendour of his genius. He spoke of the Deity at once, as a great philosopher and as a great poet might be expected to speak. "The idea which he has given of the Divinity has obtained the just admiration of all ages; it has received the approbation of most of the fathers of the church; it is one of his first claims to glory. According to his views, the Deity is perfection; the Supreme Intelligence; a Legislator and a Judge, exempt from passion and from error; the Source of all good, as well as of all truth; he is the moral law personified; the infinite and eternal model of perfection; a star, whose majesty and splendour illumine all intelligent beings; the mark which the creature, endowed with freedom, ought unceasingly to approach."*

* Degerando, &c. vol. ii. p. 256.

fine ideas and noble language; but I will still ask, is this language sufficiently clear? Is it sufficient to persuade and to attract the multitude, or to extirpate idolatry? When, for the purpose of contemplating the Deity more nearly, this eagle of philosophy wandered into the region of abstractions, could he be followed by the vulgar, and be intelligible to all the world? Indeed, was he always intelligible to himself?

Plato, besides, held the eternity of matter; and this single and serious error very considerably lowered the conceptions he had formed of the Deity.

To Plato succeeded his disciple, Aristotle—a man of very different talents and character. The Stagyrte had learnt from Socrates and Plato to conceive of the Deity; and probably no heathen ever spoke of him in a more accurate or remarkable manner. “Aristotle, ordinarily so cold and dry, suddenly becomes animated and impassioned, when the

idea of the Divinity is presented to his mind It is a grand and beautiful sight, for the friends of true philosophy to witness the two most distinguished sages of antiquity, Plato and Aristotle, so opposed to each other in other respects, meeting in perfect agreement on the subject of that doctrine, upon which the highest interests of morality and human nature depend—uniting, in the path which had been trodden by Anaxagoras and Socrates, to offer the homage of human reason to the Supreme Author of all things.”* It is, I acknowledge, a grand and beautiful sight; nevertheless, with what a striking proof does he present us of the insufficiency of human reason to acquire, and especially to preserve, the knowledge of the true God. I might insist upon the incongruities, also, which disfigured the theology of Aristotle; but I confine myself to a single remark. The rich inheritance of

* Degerando, vol. ii. p. 356—358.

Socrates, which was cultivated by two of his successors,—the fruit of labour, of genius, and of virtue, combined so remarkably in three men, the choicest of their race,—was dispersed and lost soon after they ceased to live. So much above ordinary capacities were these great truths; so little able were the people to comprehend them, when left to their own reasonings only! Strato, the disciple of Aristotle, was an atheist! Epicurus followed, who, depriving man of all moral strength, and society of all public spirit—divesting God of his providence, and the human soul of its immortality, did much more injury to man than Socrates had done him good. He distilled a poisoned drop into the bosom of luxurious civilization; and this malignant principle, gradually infecting it in all its parts, sanctioning all crimes, polluting all the sources of virtue, developing all the vices, very soon produced those hideous and foul generations,

which corrupted and disgusted the world. Some strong and pious minds, it must be confessed, were indignant at this state of things. The Portico conceived the idea of restoring patriotism to human society, of again placing religion on her throne, of again yielding to conscience its disinterested happiness, its hope of immortality, and its God; but the followers of Zeno, wavering between materialism and pantheism, proposed for the worship of man, a sort of corporeal deity, which they formed of light, intelligence, and fire, and called *Nature*.

Let us now pause, and review what we have said. We first see, that among the Greeks, in the course of many centuries, only four men, availing themselves of each other's discoveries, seem to have succeeded in obtaining some just and honourable conceptions of the Deity.

These men, in the next place, had

very little influence upon their contemporaries, and their instructions were ill understood by their disciples. We are wont to imagine, that such great truths, once discovered, could not be forgotten. It was, however, much otherwise. The fact proves that these are the truths least easily embraced, and least easily preserved.*

Lastly, these four men never addressed themselves to any but chosen disciples; and often, in secret, communicated to

* Sceptics of the present day, I may here observe, have no right, then, to attribute to philosophy the honour of that natural theology, of which they are so proud; and if Christianity had never enlightened them or their fathers, it is pretty certain that they would be just where the hearers of Socrates and the disciples of Aristotle or Anaxagoras were.

Experience seems to prove that philosophy, when left to her own resources, ends by falling into one of those gulphs, between which her path always lies—atheism and pantheism.

them that light of truth, of which the whole world was in want. Only one of them addressed himself to any but philosophers; not even one to the people at large: and all four spoke a language above their comprehension.

Let us now direct our attention to the Hebrew people: of them we shall have just the contrary to remark. "Moses," says M. B. Constant, on this subject,* "Moses, with wonderful discrimination, spoke to men of gross conceptions in a corresponding language; nevertheless, he but rarely made his doctrines subservient to their rudeness. His concessions consist more in words than in things: these are passing clouds, which obscure only for the moment the sublime notions which he gives of the Supreme Being. Frivolous discussions and problems, which admit of no solution, are carefully avoided. The Jewish legislator, unlike

* Vol. ii. pp. 215—217.

the Egyptian or Indian priests, or the philosophers of Greece, inquires not of what substance the Deity is composed; whether he exists in space or beyond space; whether he is finite or infinite; whether his existence is eternal and necessary, or whether it was at once the sudden and late effect of an inexplicable will. The prophet of Sinai avoids alike those flights of an ill-regulated imagination, which, while they aim to give ornament and splendour to the popular religions with which the priests delude the multitude, render them, by turns, disgusting and ridiculous; and those useless subtleties, which have involved the philosophic theism of India in a labyrinth, the end of which is inevitably atheism or pantheism.... In the account of the creation,—to which we must, doubtless, grant, what the genius of the East requires that we should always grant to every narrative of this kind,—

the historian speaks neither of an inert and rebellious matter, by which the Creator is clogged; nor of a mysterious egg; nor of a giant divided into parts; nor of a union between blind force and unintelligent atoms; nor of necessity, which controuls reason; nor of chance, which troubles it."

Moses, and all the Hebrew writers who followed him, uniformly speak of Jehovah, not as disciples of Egypt, but as ambassadors of God. His omnipotence; his omniscience; his unity; his infinity; his spirituality; all his perfections, in short, which were so often mistaken by the sages of Greece, are constantly declared by these rude sons of Palestine.

This knowledge of the true God is not confined to the writers: it is popular among the Jews; because the language of their sacred books, even on these subjects, is level to the understanding of

all classes of the people. It was in a simple, clear, and figurative style, that the prophets found the means of giving the most exact and the most elevated ideas of God; whilst the philosophers, most commonly, only shrouded their unphilosophic notions in a style too abstract to be intelligible. For instance: in reading the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, we see the divine power, operations, unity, and immensity, described under forms at once clear and poetical, dramatic and just. The language is such as the people could comprehend, and would dwell on with pleasure; such as would persuade, as well as at the same time enlighten the multitude. "How is it possible," says a preacher, on this subject, in language where I am proud and happy to find my own thoughts,* "how is it possible to hear these writers without wonder, when they speak to us of the

* Cellérier—*Sermons et prières*, vol. ii. p. 46. 2nd edition.

Deity? Do they attempt to give us some idea of the perfections of his nature? Nothing is sufficiently great—sufficiently sublime. *He inhabiteth light inaccessible. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in the grave, behold thou art there. His justice is like the high mountains—his judgments are a mighty deep. He created the heavens by his word, and all the hosts of heaven by the breath of his mouth.* Do they represent him to us in his relation towards man? Nothing is more simple and more touching. He is irritated—he is appeased—he repents—he is moved to pity. This is the Deity who created man. He knows what language to hold towards him. He knows that the impassible divinity of philosophy cannot affect his heart. He reveals himself to his reason, and accommodates himself to his nature. He displays his perfections to his under-

standing, and he speaks to his imagination and to his heart; he captivates him by affecting methods."

But still, how does it happen, that in adopting a style altogether abounding in images and sentiments,—a style, consequently, very unlike philosophical precision,—how does it happen, that the teachers in the Old Testament found means to let nothing escape them, which could give a false direction to the people, retard the progress of their understanding, and cause them to relapse into idolatry? How does it happen, that in manifesting the divine glory to the fearful Hebrews, the Pentateuch, nevertheless, shows them *no figure in Horeb*;* that these Hebrews, who hear the celestial voice,† who see the throne of Jehovah, in Sinai,‡ who constantly speak of his eyes, his hands, his ears, were, notwithstanding, never led by their sacred books to ascribe to

* Deut. iv. 12, 15. † Deut. v. 24. ‡ Exod. xxiv. 10.

him a human form. This, however, all the mythologies of antiquity, and all the superstitions of modern times have done. The images which the Hebrew writers have been compelled to employ, to give some idea of the glory which encircles the Most High, and the extraordinary manifestations of his presence, are borrowed only from indefinite and brilliant conceptions, calculated to inspire religious awe, and too ambiguous and too general for a people, inclined to idolatry, to imitate and worship. If Moses was not an inspired prophet, let any one explain this enigma; and the remarkable contrast which is evident between *his* instructions and *his* people, and the lessons and the fellow-countrymen of the heathen philosophers.* If no other inspired pro-

* I have pleasure in recording here a positive declaration of M. B. Constant, (vol. ii. pp. 219—221)—“I assert, then, and with so much the more conviction, because my opinion has been formed deliberately, and, so to speak, in spite of myself, the

phets succeeded Moses, let another enigma, no less difficult, be explained: the preservation of theism, from Moses to Jesus Christ, among a people of no intellectual refinement, ever strongly inclined to idolatry, and surrounded by idolaters; whilst the disciples, even of Anaxagoras or of Aristotle, though nurtured in all the learning of polished

existence and the continuance of Jewish theism, at a time, and among a people, equally incapable of conceiving the idea of it and of preserving it, are, in my estimation, phenomena, which no reasoning can explain." Some pages before (p. 213), he shows that Moses could not have derived his noble ideas of the Deity from the secret doctrines of the Egyptian priesthood—doctrines, which were far below that high degree of purity. "The theism," says he, "which in them allied itself to pantheism, is very unlike the notion of the Divine Unity with which the Hebrew books present us,—simple, clear, establishing between God and man a moral intercourse. This last circumstance constitutes the essential difference between these two kinds of theism."

Greece, allowed this fair light quickly to perish in their hands. Was there, then, less difference between the sublime lessons of Moses and the understanding of the rude sons of Judah, than between the sage teachings of Socrates and the active mind of Strato and Epicurus?

CHAPTER VIII.

CIRCUMSTANCES WORTHY OF ATTENTION
IN THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF MOSES,
WHICH SUPPORT THE
PROOF OF HIS DIVINE MISSION.

For the purpose of illustrating, with some degree of order, the ideas suggested in pp. 26 and 27, let us consider Moses in the three great acts of his ministry,—the deliverance of the Hebrews; the journey through the desert; and the giving of the law.

I. *The Deliverance.*—Moses was commissioned to deliver the Hebrews from the tyranny of Pharaoh. Was this an easy task? In reply, let us consider the three actors in this scene,—the Egyptian tyrant; the Hebrew people; and Moses.

Pharaoh was the ruler of a numerous, wealthy, and warlike people. He himself

was a man of uncommon stubbornness and audacity. What a despotic tone prevails in his answers; what obstinacy in his purposes; what promptness in his measures; what pertinacity in his resistance. The plagues of heaven afflict him, but do not make him yield. At the most, they only stagger him for an instant; and soon the natural disposition of his mind reacts against the pressure to which it has yielded. And in the midst of his desolate fields; his infected palace; his trembling court; whilst Egypt still resounds with the cry of grief which had gone through the land, Pharaoh exclaims—*Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* He hesitates not to brave his own people—Moses—the waves of the Red Sea—and the arm of Jehovah, who divided the waves in twain.

The Hebrews, as long as they were in Egypt, showed only distrust and timidity. They had no idea of suffering and fighting for liberty. The first con-

dition of their deliverance is, that they should do nothing to obtain it. After quitting Egypt, their history is nothing but a history of disobedience and complaint. The slightest difficulty arrests them; every privation discourages them; the mere sight of the Egyptian army terrifies them; and in their progress, Moses is obliged, at all hazards, to avoid the land of the Philistines, because these six hundred thousand slaves preferred again wearing their chains, under the whip of their tyrants, to forcing a passage with arms. Such were the people, who were to be rescued, in spite of themselves, from the oppression of a warlike nation and a victorious tyrant. Let us now contemplate the man who takes upon himself this strange task.

It is necessary to distinguish two periods in the life of Moses; to consider him, as it were, as two different men. We shall see, by and by, the character which he displayed in the desert, and the

reason of the change which was effected in his character. At present, let us consider him as he was at the commencement of his ministry, when he delivered the Hebrews from Egypt. He was, unquestionably, a man of considerable zeal, patriotism, and faith. These were dispositions necessary to his enterprize; but how would these have availed an ordinary man? He had, it appears, still greater need of qualities, which might have weight with the multitude, and which might controul events. Mildness and firmness, courage and presence of mind, promptness and coolness, are the elements necessary in every conqueror, in every founder of an empire, in every leader of a party: and here, also, it must be confessed, that Moses was completely deficient. Having lived forty years in a foreign land, he had not, either by his services or his talents, acquired the confidence of his brethren. Prevented from excelling in the art of oratory, by an

infirmity which impaired the organs of speech, as well as by the diffidence and timidity which were the necessary consequence of his defect, he was unable to influence the multitude—to seize a favourable moment for moulding them to his will. He trembled under the weight of the charge with which God had entrusted him. Five times he renewed his entreaty, that it might be confided to other hands: but soon after, on being compelled to comply, he was terrified at his first defeat, and thought all lost, because he had not at once gained all. The people manifested their displeasure with him by their murmurs, and despised his mission. We shall be greatly disappointed, if we expect that this strange leader of a party endeavoured to calm them by his presence, or gave a different direction to their agitated feelings, or made this first crisis instrumental in promoting his interests: so far from it, he only yields himself up to despair, and

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bitterly complains in the presence of his God. Such was Moses; and from such a liberator what could be expected? Led, perhaps, by a thoughtless patriotism, into an enterprize which was beyond his powers, he will do no more than irritate the tyrant; than disoblige his countrymen, whose slavery he will render still more galling; than distress himself, by doing injury to those whom he loved, by his attempts to serve them. This was indeed the fact. We can hardly understand how, with so little elasticity of character, so little pliancy and activity of mind, he succeeded, I do not say, in accomplishing the holy revolution which he undertook, but even in procuring for it a momentary success. That bold enterprize, however, was gloriously achieved: the Hebrews quitted Egypt, soon after the fruitless attempt I have just noticed. They left it at the requests, the entreaties, of the Egyptians, and of Pharaoh himself, and loaded with gifts by their

oppressors. Is it, then, the same Pharaoh, the same Hebrew people, the same Moses, whom we have just been considering? Yes, the very same: and a Divine Author is necessary to explain the brilliant close of this drama, which the Deity alone can unravel.

II. *The Journey*.—In this second period of his ministry, Moses displays rather a different character. He possesses more intelligence, firmness, and confidence in God. In the main, he was always the same; and it is easy, in the history of his old age, to discover the same proneness to be distrustful and to be discouraged, the same mixture of zeal and weakness, of ardour and timidity, by which his maturity and his youth had been distinguished. Nevertheless, I repeat, that an increase of confidence and firmness is also observable: he relies more on the issue, on God, and on himself; the murmurs of the people afflict him as much as ever, but alarm

him less. This phenomenon is worthy of notice. In the midst of new and extreme perils, with such a people as the Hebrews to conduct, and with a leader of eighty years of age, we should have looked for a change of an opposite kind. Every impartial man, I think, will see, tolerably clearly, in this change, the consequence, and, at the same time, the proof of those miracles, which Moses was astonished at himself for having wrought.

Other circumstances in this journey prove to us, much more strongly still, the interposition of the Deity. Every thing in it is singular. Moses does nothing as an ordinary leader. In the first place, instead of following the sea coast, in order to pass from Egypt into Canaan, he deviates considerably from the direct road. His object was,—and I have already said this was necessary,—to avoid the country of the Philistines, and to save his timid soldiers from battle.

But how does he contrive, to save them at once from fear and danger? He prolongs their stay in Egypt, until it was necessary to hasten their flight; he detains them at a distance from Canaan, whither they were desirous of going; he keeps them near the shores of the Red Sea, which they had no means of crossing; he encloses them at Pihahiroth,* in a narrow mountain pass, between the sea and a defile. This perilous situation offered Pharaoh, apparently, the too certain means of subjugating them anew, and he hastened to avail himself of them. As might be expected, the tyrant triumphed—the Hebrews were dismayed. In fact, a miracle alone could have saved them. If no miracle had been wrought, how could, not only the safety of the Israelites, but especially the conduct of Moses, as a leader, be accounted for?

Once, in Arabia, he sojourns forty years in those barren regions, where

* Exodus xiv. 1—9.

rapid caravans can hardly escape the deadly influence of thirst and hunger, of the sands and the winds of the desert. In every direction he traverses and crosses this barren and savage wilderness, so dreaded by travellers. We are almost disposed to say that he feared to quit it. If we admit that God himself presided over the march of the Hebrews, and provided for their wants, I think I can see the object of the Deity. His object was, that that feeble generation, which neither the *house of bondage* itself could inspire with a love of liberty, nor the miracles of Egypt could endow with confidence, should die in the sands of Arabia. I see that in the tents of Israel he was rearing a new people, who, from their infancy, should be accustomed to privations, fatigue, battle, and discipline, and be thus prepared for the conquest of Canaan. But if it be contended, that this plan, instead of being that of the God of Israel, were that of an ordinary

man—of the aged Moses, it is quite inexplicable. How, then, did Moses, in the midst of the desert, support this immense company of old men, of women, of children, and of cowards? Where, besides, will you find the conqueror, the founder, who will voluntarily consent to delay the accomplishment of his favourite purpose for forty years; or, in other words, who prefers leaving it unfinished, and who prepares himself for dying on the way? When Columbus discovered the unknown continent, which was the object of the labours and sufferings of a life of genius and intrepidity, who would have seriously proposed to him to spend half a century in cruising on its shores, before he disembarked? No; it is not thus that men act: they feel that the remote future pertains not to them, and they are too impatient of success to protract it. Such conduct suits only him who is “patient because he is eternal.”

I go still further. Supposing it possible

to explain the conduct of Moses, without the interposition of the Deity, the submission of the people to this extravagant project would still be inexplicable. How is it that this people, so prompt to revolt, and always ready to complain, suffered their leader peremptorily to deny them an entrance into the land of peace; and when arrived on the borders of that country, to prohibit them from taking possession of it, avowedly designing that they should close their days in the wilderness? How is it that they did not compel their leader to deliver them from this vast tomb, either for the purpose of entering into Canaan, or of seeking another abode, if the land of promise was too difficult of access, or even, if it were necessary, of returning and submitting to the yoke of the Pharaohs? Had they not already more than once regretted the sensual comforts which they enjoyed while in a state of slavery? This remarkable submission, on the part of the people,

appears to me to prove two things: first, that the sojourning in the wilderness was sweetened by the gifts of God: that God undertook to nourish and support Israel, even amidst those fatal sands; secondly, that the way was pointed out by a divine hand; and that the people received the order of their march, not from Moses only, but from that pillar of cloud and fire, which rested on the tabernacle in the sight of all the children of Jacob, and declared the presence of Jehovah.

The more we examine the conduct of Moses in the desert, the more remarks of a similar kind shall we have to make. One I will mention, by which, I confess, I am greatly struck. Moses, a leader chosen by God, whose hand divided the waters of the sea, obtains a victory from heaven, or calls down thunder on the rebels, Moses, who is unable, it seems, to lead the people, except by enthusiasm of confidence, and by the submission of terror, is not contented, however, to relate

to them his own hesitation and his former failings; he confesses, moreover, by word of mouth and in writing, that he has sinned, as the leader of Israel and as the ambassador of the Most High; that a severe punishment is inflicted on him; that it will be denied to him to bring his enterprize to a successful termination. Does Moses, then, wantonly provoke the Hebrews to further acts of distrust and rebellion, as if they had not been already sufficiently guilty? Does he design to abate their confidence, by declaring to them that he will soon abandon them, at the very crisis of their fate too? Was the presence of the leader whom God had always heard, and who controuled nature itself, to be withdrawn, at the very period when it was more than ever needed? It must be acknowledged, then, that this simple and honest man relates, without artifice, all that had happened, and all that he knew. He is not an impostor, who, to gain his ends, pretends

to a celestial mission. He is really the ambassador of God. If he was not, he would be evidently as little capable of feigning this divine mission, as he was of fulfilling it.

III. *The Delivery of the Law.*—This last act of the ministry of Moses, like the two we have already considered, will prove to us, and in a similar way, that the work of the Hebrew leader was really the work of God. We cannot here develop the principles, the object, the admirable resources of the Mosaic law. Time would fail me, were I to enter on this subject: a few remarks, however, in the following chapters, shall be introduced.* I will, for a moment, suppose

* No work with which I am acquainted, at least, in French, has yet developed the true spirit of the Mosaic law. The only complete, profound, and judicious work which exists on the subject, is the *Mosaïches Recht* of Michaëlis; but six German volumes, written in a diffuse style,

it admitted, that this law was ably conceived, and well adapted to accompanying in heavy and endless digressions, find few readers among us: and of the many literary men, who have undertaken to give a French translation of the work, not one has persevered with it.

M. Pastoret has written an interesting book on *Moïse considéré comme législateur et comme moraliste*; but it is little more than an elegant description of the exterior, and, so to speak, of the *materiel* of the law. The secret views of the legislator,—those hidden springs, which, in all political institutions, and especially in those of Moses, form so important a part,—are what the author had it not even in contemplation to inquire into.

A work, which has very recently appeared, on the Mosaic law (*Loi de Moïse*, by J. Salvador), has produced some sensation, and been held in considerable estimation; but it does not supply the want to which I have alluded. The author, who is at the same time the advocate of Moses, and denies his divine mission, places himself on ground which it is not easy to defend. I venture to predict, that every reader conversant with these subjects, will, like myself, find in this book, first,

plish the purpose designed by it. This is a fact which my readers will readily see in what relates to the general design of the Mosaic law, an unphilosophic system, arranged beforehand, to which the author often makes facts bend, and sacrifices clearness and even good sense; secondly, in his attempts to destroy all divine intervention in the ministry of Moses—improbabilities striking enough to refute themselves; and lastly, in the detailed exposition of the Mosaic laws, some remarks which are very just and true on the nature, the effects, or the springs of the institution. But these are only isolated observations; or, rather, awkwardly connected by a false bond of union. The real character of the whole is imperfectly seen.

The success of this book, besides its real merit, may be traced to a different cause. It appeared at a very seasonable time, to meet an intellectual want. The jests of Voltaire are become common and disgusting. The present generation wants something of a serious nature, in matters of belief—something which shall satisfy the religious sentiment. This sentiment displays itself everywhere, even among sceptics themselves; but their minds are not yet enlightened. They have prejudices against revelation, which they

grant. If they had any doubt respecting it, they would only have to reflect on the duration of these laws, and on the effects which they have produced. This, wish not to have; or, perhaps, which they cannot persuade themselves to shake off. In the meantime, they desire to be better acquainted with this revelation; they bring themselves, at least, to show it a certain degree of respect; they imagine it possible that the Old Testament, as well as the New, may contain beauties, forgotten or calumniated by a former generation; they wish, in a word, gravely and seriously to examine, and even to admire it, without, however, exposing themselves to the charge of superstition or of prejudice. In this disposition of certain minds, a book, which, without making Moses a divinely-commissioned messenger—without requiring a belief in the miracles of the old dispensation, demands, however, respect for it as a work of human genius, allied to science, friendly to justice, and as the guardian of weakness and of liberty—a book, I say, of this description, written with care and arranged with talent, contains all that is required to make it well received. We cannot, then, be surprised that the author's reasonings and assertions have not been very strictly examined.

then, admitted, I have four remarks to offer.

Moses was undoubtedly acquainted with Egyptian, Hebrew, and Arabian customs. Independently of the divine aid which he received, he might have employed them, more or less successfully, in his new system of legislation. But something very different from this is required; and it is the talent of selecting, combining, and inventing, with a reference to the future, by which his work is distinguished. The institutions which he gave the Hebrews were formed for them,—prepared for their posterity,—adapted for their future country. If they are founded on the customs and manners of the people, such as they were at the time, they are not less evidently designed to transform them into a new people. If they remind us of a people born in Egypt, they still more clearly have reference to a people who were never to return to Egypt. In a word, they bear the marks of profound combinations and

enlarged views; and when they borrow from the laws of Egypt, it is always with modifications, as important as they are skilful. Now had Moses, of himself, that degree of knowledge and ability, which the circumstances of the case required? A single fact seems to me to decide the question. When Moses found himself in the desert, at the head of his people, oppressed with the three-fold task of their teacher, judge, and leader, he was not able, of himself, to devise the simple and easy organization, which might furnish him with the means of fulfilling it. He thought he did enough, when he devoted his person and his time to it. Seated in the open air, he listened to, he judged, he taught, throughout the day his six hundred thousand soldiers with their wives and children, exhausting his strength, without satisfying their wants. It was necessary that Jethro, his father-in-law, should apprize him of what he had to do.* He suggested to

* Exodus xviii. 13—27.

him the idea of establishing a gradation of inferior officers, who, equally related to the people and their leader, should form the medium of communication between him and them; should secure to them more effectual protection, and to the leader a more efficient authority. Yet neither this idea, natural at it was, nor any system of a similar nature, presented itself to the mind of Moses; doubtless, because it had no analogy with the customs of Egypt. And this is he—another Lycurgus—who, without any aid from Heaven, invented the Jewish law; that system, which was so abundant in resources, and so ingenious in their due arrangement; that work of genius, so well adapted for future ages, designed firmly to plant the Hebrews in the soil of Canaan, by means of their customs and their wants, and to wean them for ever from Egypt! It is he who devised the union of religious and political power, in such a manner, as that they

should mutually strengthen each other, without ever encroaching on or opposing one another! This, indeed, is a complete paradox, not easily rendered credible. Thus, then, the farther we advance in our examination of the ministry of Moses, the greater are the difficulties which attend us, upon the absurd supposition that this extraordinary man was merely a skilful impostor, aided only by the inspirations of his genius, not by those of the Deity.

But, further, how did Moses obtain the submission of the people to the laws which he enacted for them? These laws were not instituted to please them. If they secured to them the possession of property, sanctioned their customs, and established festivals, what was still more obvious in them was, that they imposed intolerable restrictions and continual privations; and in their worship, in their civil and domestic life, in their social relations, and in their military, com-

mercial, or agricultural enterprizes, nothing but restrictions, restraints upon their natural inclinations—a new and galling yoke. This, however, is what was to be substituted for their old customs, formed after the example of Egypt and Canaan. To make such a people voluntarily submit to such laws, was beyond the power of man—beyond the power of Moses. The desert, Sinai, the pillar of fire, and the voice of God—all these were necessary. It was necessary that the people, supported and led by the Most High, should learn that they had no will of their own; no power to examine, deliberate, or choose; that they were to receive all the commands, as well as all the gifts, of their Divine Author, as benefits, and, at the same time, as absolutely necessary.

Some of these laws are altogether inexplicable, if Moses was an impostor; for they are such as to suppose the concurrence and the security of a par-

ticular Providence. In some cases, indeed, the agency of God himself was necessary to sanction and enforce a law; otherwise, the faith of the people might have failed, and they might have suspected the lawgiver of imposture. Many instances of this kind might be noticed. I will content myself with one.

Every seventh year the land was to remain uncultivated. This is not the place to inquire into the political, agricultural, and religious motives, for so apparently strange an institution. I merely state this fact:—Moses, on the part of the Deity, promises that no scarcity shall be occasioned; that notwithstanding the double tythe which was required from the land, the surplus of preceding harvests shall be sufficient for two years' consumption.* Would not experience have immediately proved the imposture, if God, who causeth the fruits of the earth to flourish, had not provided that

* Levit. xxv. 21.

the promise of Moses should be fulfilled? But what is still more remarkable, and renders this reflection more striking, is, that the people to whom this promise and this law referred, were a nomadic and pastoral people, who were not acquainted with the arts and customs of agriculture; whose inexperience or indolence were, of themselves, sufficient to occasion the frequent recurrence of those famines, from which Moses declares that they shall be exempt.

If we examine the institutions of Moses, with reference to himself, and to the advantages which he might have derived from his pretended imposture, they will surprize us no less.

Every imposture has an object in view, and an aim more or less selfish. Men practice deceit for money, for pleasure, or for glory. If, by a strange combination, the love of mankind ever entered into the mind of an impostor, doubtless, even then, he has contrived to reconcile,

at least, his own selfish interests with those of the human race. If men deceive others, for the sake of causing their own opinions or their own party to triumph, they may sometimes, perhaps, forget their own interests, during the struggle, but they again remember them when the victory is achieved. It is a general rule, that no impostor forgets himself long. But Moses forgot himself, and forgot himself to the last. Yet there is no middle supposition. If Moses was not a divinely-inspired messenger, he was an impostor, in the strongest sense of the word. It is not, as in the case of Numa, a slight and single fraud, designed to secure some good end, that we have to charge him with; but a series of deceits, many of which were gross; a profound, dishonest, perfidious, sanguinary dissimulation, continued for the space of forty years. If Moses was not a divinely-commissioned prophet, he was not the saviour of the people, but their tyrant.

and their murderer. Still, I repeat, this barbarous impostor always forgot himself; and his disinterestedness, as regarded himself personally, his family, and his tribe, is one of the most extraordinary features in his administration.

As to himself personally. He is destined to die in the wilderness: he is never to taste the tranquillity, the plenty, and the delight, the possession of which he promises to his countrymen: he shares with them only their fatigues and privations: he has more anxieties than they, on their account, in their acts of disobedience, and in their perpetual murmurings.

As to his family. He does not nominate his sons as his successors: he places them, without any privileges or distinctions, among the obscure sons of Levi; they are not even admitted into the sacerdotal authority. Unlike all other fathers, Moses withdraws them from public view, and deprives them of

the means of obtaining glory and favour. Samuel and Eli assign a part of their paternal authority to their sons, and permit them even to abuse it; but the sons of Moses, in the wilderness, are only the simple carriers of the tabernacle: like all the other sons of Kohath, if they even dare to raise the veil which covers the sacred furniture, the burden of which they carry, death is denounced against them.

As to his tribe. Moses has often been accused of establishing a theocracy, for the benefit of the priests; of having taught them to govern despotically, by abusing the revered name of Jehovah. To hear these sceptics; to read even their most recent works,* one would believe

* See, for example, Reynier *Economie publique et rurale des Arabes et des Juifs*. The author, so respectable in many other ways, as a man, as a learned man, and as a writer, is wrong in his views of the Pentateuch; in judging of it, not on its own merits, but *after the commandments of men*,

that all the wealth and power were confided to the hands of the priests. As well may we accuse Cicero of having conspired with Catiline. Have the authors of these strange, though so frequently repeated charges, ever read the works of Moses?

The Mosaic system was, it is true, a theocracy; for the God of Israel was the author of the political, as well as religious institutions—strengthened both by his own authority, and engaged to sanction them for the future, by punishing those who infringed them. Moreover, he reserved to himself the right of governing the state in circumstances of difficulty, not by the hereditary priesthood, but by judges or political leaders, selected from

by which the rabbins have disfigured it; sometimes, also, after the modern customs of the East. On these erroneous principles, he has ascribed to Moses an absurd and rapacious theocracy, in contradiction both to the Pentateuch and to history.

all the tribes, sustained by his power and animated by his spirit. But far from giving the priests complete power, the Sovereign God, and his servant, Moses, committed the public weal to civil and judicial magistrates, who were placed on a level with or above the priesthood: they, moreover, preserved to the people such extensive rights, as, in our days, they would no more have expected than received. The Mosaic institutions, in short, opposed such barriers to the ambition of the descendants of Aaron, that they could not abuse their privileges—that they never did abuse them; at least, the priests, as a body, I will venture to say, never did.* The priest,

* I speak only, be it well observed, of the time when the prophetic inspiration, and the institutions of Moses, yet flourished among the Hebrews. Shortly after the captivity, when the priesthood were alone, without the laws and the prophets, which had before served to counterbalance its authority; when it was, moreover, the only rallying

Abiathar,* may have entered into a conspiracy, which was quickly suppressed; but the priests, as a body, were not implicated in it. The high priest was faithful; and the blood of Aaron could not save the guilty. Jehoiada† was enabled to restore the lawful heir to the throne; but still, even here, the agency and the influence of the hierarchy are not sufficient to explain this political revolution.‡ Every thing indicates an isolated, an

and a point for patriotic sentiments and national feelings; when it no longer met with opposition from within, and had no religious guide without, it became, really, what a hierarchy always becomes when left to its natural tendency. I earnestly beg that this restriction may be borne in mind, whenever I undertake the defence of the Hebrew priesthood.

* 1 Kings i. 7.

† 2 Kings xi.

‡ It cannot be denied, that if we wish to form a right judgment concerning this revolution, we must study it in the Bible, and not in a tragedy, however worthy of our admiration that may be.

extraordinary case. If the throne had not been occupied by a stranger, and an abandoned woman; if, in a season of confusion and anarchy, the priesthood had not been the natural representative, and the only support of national opinion; if the army had not been disposed to expel the usurper;* if, lastly, the infant king had not been placed, by the very circumstances of the case, under the patronage of the priests who preserved his life, Jehoiada, so far from succeeding in delivering his country, would not even have dared to attempt it. I repeat, with the fullest conviction, that the priests, individually, may have done things foreign to their office, but, as a body, they continued in their proper station; and when the equilibrium was destroyed, it was to their injury, and by the increase of the power of opposing elements. I refer to the institution of hereditary kings. Soon

* 2 Kings xi. 4—9.

after the establishment of the monarchy, the influence of the priests was weakened; they lost even that influence which Moses had intended them to possess. Those popular honours, which are paid to wealth, to external consequence and dignity, were transferred to the hereditary chiefs of the kingdom and the army: the moral and religious authority became the share of holy prophets, who were the protectors of the oppressed, the scourge of courtier-priests and tyrannical kings,—poor and suffering servants of God, who sent them forth, forming no caste; without any temporal influence; without a common tie; without any other advantage than a generous heart, a sincere voice, unbounded devotion to duty, and patience unchanged under persecution. This was, doubtless, real power, though indirect, and of a moral kind; but it was a power not dangerous to temporal authority, and it could not be con-

founded with the regular, hereditary, and organized authority of the priests.* I

* M. B. Constant has more than once made this mistake. Sometimes, it is true, he appears to distinguish between the priests and the prophets, but he often confounds them; and after having described the dangers to which the kings were exposed, when threatened by the usurpations of a caste, he cites, in proof, the legal resistance of individual prophets. This frequent error prejudices the defence of those whom he accuses; and without it, M. Constant probably could not have deceived himself as to the social condition of the Hebrew priesthood. Those who, from the time of Moses to that of Malachi, whether judges, seers, or prophets, were called messengers of God, were not priests. The latter did not make pretensions to habitual inspiration, like the former. On the other hand, the priests formed an hereditary caste, whilst the messengers of God were private individuals. Though both of them were engaged in the service of the same God, they were often opposed to each other. The priests superintended the external parts of their worship; the judges attended to the government; the prophets, to the correction of morals. When the divine messengers

willingly grant, that this would soon have been oppressive to the nation and

were judges and military chiefs, they controuled the order of the priesthood; when they were simply prophets, they raised their voices against that ritual worship which had been substituted for moral virtue; and when the priests were rich and subtle courtiers, they always showed themselves the enemies of the prophets. Neither party, then, could be denounced and condemned in common. Now which could be accused of engrossing a mighty power, alarming to the sovereign and oppressive to the people? The priests? The fact proves that they were almost always submissive—never domineering: Moses provided against that. The caste, always controuled, was also weakened in the course of time. The Levites fell into abject poverty; and the priests, in order to be something, became courtiers. Could the messengers of God be charged with engrossing too much power? They formed no corporate body; they enjoyed no hereditary privileges; they were selected from all the tribes. The Spirit of God found them at the wine-press, like Gideon, or amongst their herds, like Amos. Before the monarchy, the military judges acted as the necessary counterpoise to the priestly authority;

to its chiefs, if the law had not provided against this danger; but it did provide against it: and no sacerdotal order was afterwards, poor and disinterested preachers, they formed, in an absolute kingdom, the only legal and protecting opposition. At the same time, far from aiding the priests in weakening the kingly power, as might have been supposed, they, in fact, supported the kings and the people against the usurpations of the priests; because they courageously censured their crimes, and showed the insufficiency of external worship.

I ask, then, again, where does M. B. Constant see, among the Hebrews, that power inimical to society, of which he declares himself the enemy, and which he thus defines—"This exclusive privilege of power, of science, of knowledge, of preaching, and authority, and which is a sentence of outlawry upon the majority of the human race—a condemnation to ignorance, to inferiority, and slavery." (Vol. ii. p. 471.) An odious power, which he sets himself to oppose, in the name of the religious sentiment itself; in doing which, he doubtless renders service, both to religion and humanity; but he would oppose it more effectually, by not allowing his blows to fall on the innocent as well as the guilty.

ever better kept within bounds, than the priests of this much calumniated theocracy. Let us judge of this by the following considerations.

Moses gave the priests the power of knowledge and of virtue; but no secret to preserve, no learned fraud to transmit to their children, no hieroglyphics, no mysteries. If they were the guardians of the sacred books, the people were bound, equally with them, to read and to teach those books.

He gave them a vast moral influence over public opinion; but no direct share in the government. He gave them judicial authority, with respect to the objects of worship and police; but necessarily limited, by the rivalry of lay-judges, who attended to all the other affairs, and by the supreme authority of a mixed tribunal, which decided causes in the last resort.

He gave them important and special functions, which the father transmitted to

the son, to the exclusion of all the other Israelites; but no legal privilege. Injustice and immorality were punished among them, as among all, and by the same judges.

He gave them, at least, he gave their chief, the right of consulting Jehovah, by a particular rite; but that took place only in very remarkable circumstances, and, as it appears, at the request of the civil authorities: the rest of the priests, and the high priest himself, in other respects, had no pretension to divine inspiration. What, moreover, became of this privilege, when, by the side of those who were endowed with it, devoted prophets arose from every rank of society, who spoke unceasingly, and to the people at large, in the name of the Lord?

He gave them abundant revenues, to enable them to support the dignity of their office, and the pomp of their ceremonial; but no capital, no land, no

means of amassing wealth, of securing the favour of the people, and of changing the constitution. Of all the Hebrews, these men alone, whose power has been so exaggerated, had no heritage in Israel! And yet Israel had dwelt in Egypt, where they had seen the priests possessing, as their own, a third of the country; they had been familiar with this privilege; they, doubtless, thought it but natural, that the new legislator should make a similar arrangement. Where, then, is it possible to find a sacerdotal order, less dangerous to public liberty and government? Where can we find more complete disinterestedness, than in Moses? Is not his the character of an upright man, who has the general good, not his own interests, at heart; of a man, who submissively acquiesces in the commands of God, without resistance and without demur?

When I consider these several things; when I reflect on all the ministry of

Moses,—on his life, on his death, on his character, on his abilities, and his success,—I am powerfully convinced that he was the messenger of God. If you consider him only as an able legislator,—as a Lycurgus—as a Numa,—his actions are inexplicable. We find not in him the affections, the interests, the views, which usually belong to the human heart. The simplicity, the harmony, the verity of this natural character are gone: they give place to an incoherent union of ardour and imposture; of daring and of timidity; of incapacity and genius; of cruelty and sensibility. No! Moses was inspired by God. He received from God the law which he left his countrymen. These five books, in which it is contained, together with their history, were written under the superintendence of God—they contain his Word.

CHAPTER IX.

MORAL LAWS OF THE PENTATEUCH.

The proof which these laws furnish, in favour of the Old Testament, has been hinted at in p. 31. I here add some general remarks on this part of the Mosaic institution.

I. These laws are worthy of attention, on account of the pure morality which they tend to establish. The nations in the neighbourhood of the Hebrews, Egypt and Canaan, were plunged in the most dreadful enormities, with a picture of which I will not distress my readers. Those, whose study of the Latin authors has led them to an acquaintance with the shameful depravity of Rome, under the emperors, will be astonished to learn that they have here fearful discoveries to make; and to find crimes, which were nearly

unknown to the most corrupt of the Romans, consecrated, in Egypt, to the worship of the gods. In order to save the Hebrews from this pestilential contagion, Moses employed prohibitions, chastisements, and precautions. He succeeded; and his people, of all the ancient nations, were, perhaps, the most free from all these crimes. Men have not been ashamed, however, to charge the laws of Moses with what they, in fact, so happily and carefully prevented: the reason is, that there was a time, when every thing was regarded as lawful and becoming, by which ridicule could be thrown upon Revelation. Human sacrifices; crimes repugnant to nature; barbarity of every kind, have been, without hesitation, ascribed, indirectly, to the Mosaic laws—laws, which were decidedly hostile to such crimes. The authors of these calumnies knew well, that readers who have been familiar with such dis-

gusting railleries, would never study the Old Testament, with a view to appreciate its value.

But, perhaps, an objection, apparently better founded, may be brought against the Hebrew law. Some persons may be astonished, that a divine legislator has allowed so many customs to continue, which are unworthy of the holiness of the Supreme Being: such, for instance, as polygamy and divorce; that he has made such unbecoming concessions to his age; and that his laws so frequently enter into minute particulars, which shock our delicacy. I refer those who feel this as an objection, to what I have said, pp. 35—37; and I shall add three reflections.

In the first place, Moses concedes to the rudeness of his times, only what it would have been useless for him to have refused. If we suppose, that before the era of Christianity, and the purifying influence which its doctrines exerted over

men's feelings and sentiments, it would have been possible to abolish polygamy and divorce; if we suppose that the laws of Moses would have been in force for fifty years after his death, or even till the end of his life, had he legislated with that rigour for which the people were so little prepared, we know nothing of the Hebrews, nor of their age, nor of the manners of the East.

Again; Moses, in fact, makes no concessions of this kind, except to improve the morals of the people; and with a view, more effectually, to extirpate evils of greater magnitude, with which it was not possible for him to make any compromise. Besides, he always did it so as to modify, restrict, and, in time, to destroy, what, for the present, he was obliged to tolerate. He permits polygamy; but he sets limits to it. He secures the rights of all the wives and all the children: he places the mother and her children, whom the husband, with unjust fastidiousness, has aban-

done, under the protection of the law. He permits divorce; but he accompanies it with such usages and formalities, that the tardiness of the process tends to prevent rashness, and appease anger. He forbids those sudden divorces, which too often, in the East, outrage the marriage tie; and which, in connection with polygamy, make the most sacred union only a profane traffic. Even in the law which allows divorce, we perceive, in a word, that Moses respected marriage, and sought to make his people understand the sanctity of this union.

If, finally, we compare, with the concessions which Moses made, the laws, and, especially, the manners of Mahomet; the customs and the opinions of all the Eastern nations, whether ancient or modern, we shall be astonished at the height to which the Hebrew leader rises above them all. He alone forbade his people, and especially their kings, to keep a haram: he alone dispensed with those

degraded men, by whom despots, in their jealousy, caused themselves to be surrounded; and in prohibiting this frightful custom, he carefully avoids every thing which might give rise to it, or suggest even the idea of it.

II. The Mosaic laws were distinguished by a benevolent and kind character, which tended to develope those dispositions among the Hebrews. They indignantly forbade human sacrifices, which were so generally offered; they softened the customs of war, which were so ferocious in those barbarous ages; they undertook the defence of the poor, the accused, of women, and slaves. In these several particulars, the legislator was undoubtedly compelled to make considerable concessions to the rudeness of his countrymen; but when we compare *his* laws, with the customs then generally prevalent, we cannot mistake the tendency and the effect of the former. With emotion we observe the divine messenger

taking the part of all the oppressed, and assuring even the beasts of burden of kind treatment. It seems that he wished to produce, and, by degrees, to develop the sensibilities of the Hebrews; and, at last, to civilize them, by means of mercy and benevolence. Let me mention some particular circumstances, in reference to the laws affecting strangers.

It must be remembered, that among the ancients, strangers were called barbarians, treated as enemies, and often deprived of the protection of the common law. The Gospel had not yet taught men, that all were brethren; and that the heretic and an enemy were still our neighbours. Moreover, the law of Moses powerfully tended to separate the Jews from all other people; to remove them from their neighbours, in order to secure them from the influence of their example; and to foster public spirit by means of national pride. It might have been

expected, therefore, that Moses would treat strangers as they were every where treated; and, perhaps, even with still greater severity: but the legislator was particularly anxious to make his people compassionate and generous. He certainly endeavoured to remove all strangers from Palestine, by every means compatible with humanity. But this is the law which he framed respecting them—*If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you, shall be unto you as one born amongst you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.** The Lord, in whose name Moses spoke, calls himself the God who *loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.†* He appears unwilling that persons of this description should remain in a land which is not their own,

* Levit. xix, 33, 34. † Deut. x. 18.

destitute of resources and support; and he promises them a part of the alms, and even a share in the festivities, of the Hebrews.* He provides against their suffering from those legal oppressions, which were common in the infancy of civilization; and commands that they shall be subject to no other laws and penalties, than those to which the Israelites themselves are subject.† Moreover, desirous of sanctioning the law, in a certain sense, by his own example, God unfolds the gates of the sanctuary to them, and declares that he will not disdain their offerings.‡ It is thus, that in the protecting Deity of the children of Abraham, we are permitted to discover the heavenly Father of the whole human race. But there is another law, still more remarkable, on the same subject, and which shows, perhaps, more clearly, the generous

* Deut. xxiv. 19—21. xxvi. 11—13.

† Levit. xxiv. 15—22. Numbers xv. 15, 16.

‡ Numbers xv. 14—16.

intention of the legislator. Every one remembers the persecutions to which the Israelites in Egypt were subjected. Those who are intimately acquainted with the laws of the Pentateuch know, moreover, with what ingenuity and ability the legislator endeavoured to efface from the minds of the Hebrews their recollections of Egypt and its customs. Nevertheless, from a feeling of respect for that hospitality, which was formerly shown by the Egyptians; for all those acts of courtesy and kindness, by which, doubtless, the subjects of Pharaoh often sought to mitigate the sufferings of their oppressed neighbours, Moses, wishing to awaken and foster in Israel every benevolent and generous affection, commanded, that in remembrance of the sojourning of the Hebrews in the land of Goshen, they should always treat the Egyptians as guests, and not as enemies. If they settled in Palestine, he granted them even the privilege of obtaining the right of citizenship, in the third gene-

ration.* In short, the oppression of strangers was one of the twelve crimes which were solemnly cursed on Mount Ebal,† in a ceremony as solemn as it was fearful. The Pentateuch refers ten times‡ to those affecting precepts, so anxiously regarded, and which are, in fact, more Christian than Jewish. The laws relating to other victims of ancient social barbarities, would supply me with many similar remarks, and would often claim our admiration of the ingenious and benevolent combinations which were made. Thus, in the laws relating to the right of the *blood-avenger*,—a barbarous usage, arising out of a point of honour, and the real duel of the Eastern people,—we should see how Moses, without attempting, at once, to abolish a prejudice more powerful than all law, confines

* Deut. xxiii. 7, 8. † Deut. xxvii. 19.

‡ Exod. xxii. 21. xxiii. 9. Levit. xix. 33, 34. xxiv. 22. Numbers xv. 14—16. Deut. x. 18, 19. xxiii. 7, 8. xxiv. 17—21. xxvi. 11—13. xxvii. 19.

it within the limit of legal and just restrictions, and renders it almost of no effect.* And the manner in which this is done, shows that he only tolerates it, in order to restrain it more effectually, and very soon to abolish it altogether. In the law respecting infanticide,† we should see, that while he appears to countenance this cruel rite, to which unnatural men were strongly addicted, he rescues the children, and reveres the feelings of nature in the fathers, by requiring the intervention of a tribunal, the consent of the mother, and another

* See *Note by the Translator*, p. 63.

† *Note by the Translator*.—The author here alludes to the punishment of the rebellious son. By one of the laws of Moses, a father was empowered to punish the more heinous transgressions of his son, by stoning. This, however, was never carried into effect, but in cases of extreme necessity. See Deut. xxi. 18—21. See also *Michaelis's Commentaries on the Laws of Moses*, Art. 294.

hand to execute the sentence. But these details would lead me too far from my object; and those which I have mentioned must suffice.

It is impossible, I think, not to be struck with the spirit of these laws, and the views with which they were given to the Jews. Some readers, however, I fear, will be less struck by it, on account of the painful impression which has been left on their minds by other laws. I allude to those, which, being designed to support the constitution, and to strike terror into the minds of the rebellious, denounce the penalty of death on crimes, which, in our judgment, are undeserving of so harsh a sentence. Upon this subject, let me refer to what I have said, pp. 40—45. and I shall add the following reflections.

Many of these laws aimed less at the offence of the guilty than the danger to which this offence exposed the state. What law is there, whether ancient or

modern, which does not treat with greater severity crimes committed against the state, than those which are committed against private individuals? The former are often more excusable in the eyes of conscience, but they are more prejudicial to the public good, and therefore they are, and ought to be, more severely checked. Thus it is that among the Hebrews, all acts which led to idolatry, were punished with death, because idolatry would have subverted the state, introduced a dreadful corruption of manners, and destroyed the constitution. Awaking a thousand fatal propensities in the minds of the Hebrews: idolatry was like a dreadful contagion, which with alarming rapidity extended to whole generations of men, and could not be repressed with too much precaution, promptness, and energy.*

* The terrible laws directed (Deut. xiii.) against cities, houses, and individuals, who did not immediately oppose the first appearance of idolatry, are altogether in the spirit of sanitary laws;

Some laws place restrictions on the application of the penalty, which have not been sufficiently noticed. Thus, for example, it has been said, that the violation of the Sabbath, and certain infringements of the ceremonial law, were punished with death. This is true; but only when the crime was committed *presumptuously**—that is, when notorious guilt was combined with disobedience; when it was accompanied with an avowed refusal of submission to the God of

they are to be considered as designed to prevent the sudden breaking out of a pestilence. This is the true point of view in which we should regard them; ever remembering that rigorous chastisement, or, rather, complete destruction, was always, unhappily, the only remedy by which this focus of moral corruption could be destroyed. The extermination of the Canaanites may be explained in the same way; the same social necessity made it into a law; and all the subsequent misfortunes of the Jewish nation may, perhaps, be attributed to the non-observance of this law.

* Numbers xv. 30.

Israel; and, so to speak, when it was the commencement of idolatry.

Other laws, sufficiently numerous, designed to point out crime, and alarm criminals much more than to punish them, aimed at offences, which, from their very nature, it was almost impossible to prove. Such, for instance, were those which regarded many violations of the laws relating to ceremonial purity—violations, which could only be known by the spontaneous confession of the guilty. In ordinary governments, it would be dangerous thus to allow the citizens to disobey laws with impunity—laws, which could not reach them. It was not the same under a theocracy, where, behind visible judges, the guilty saw their legislator and their Sovereign God, who recorded their crimes in the book of human actions, and was preparing to punish them, even in this life, according to his solemn declaration. Of what consequence was it, that the

criminal was certain of escaping the tribunals, if he was convinced that sickness, war, or misfortune would visit him for his violations of the law—that if he persisted in transgressing it, he was compelled to do it in secret; for the notoriety of his crime would be necessarily followed by punishment? Hence, the fault, if concealed, injured only the guilty man himself, and infected not the whole nation by the fatal contagion of example. The law, therefore, was exactly calculated, in all cases of this kind, to prevent the offence, without the shedding of blood.

The Jews never had among them any of those refined tortures, which were too common among the Orientals. They never sought, in the prolonged sufferings of the victim, the hateful pleasure of vengeance, or an absurd mode of learning the truth. They practised but two kinds of punishment: one the most

ancient and natural method of all, the other the most speedy—stoning and the sword.*

* The following remark of M. B. Constant (vol. ii. pp. 217, 218) is applicable to the principal subject of this chapter, and might be adduced as a new argument, in favour of the pure and benevolent tendency of the Mosaic laws.

“The rites which the Jewish books prescribe, strange as they may appear to us, in our advanced state of civilization, are less sanguinary, less corrupting, less favourable to superstition, than those of the people who were subjected to priestly polytheism. When we reflect on the ceremonies, the customs, the modes of worship among these people, we shall always see, in the first rank, human sacrifices and obscene festivals. The Hebrews owe it to Moses that they escaped this double reproach.”

CHAPTER X.

COMMON MISTAKES IN THE MODE OF FORMING
A JUDGMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

The objections which are brought against the Old Testament, are often owing to the erroneous view in which we consider it. This is the consequence, however, of a praiseworthy and very natural principle. I allude to the exalted idea which a religious man forms of a book declared to be divine. We hear it spoken of as the *Word of God*; and our thoughts immediately ascend to that perfect Being, before whom our virtues, our knowledge, and our greatness, are only imperfection, ignorance, and meanness. We expect to find the language always sublime; the matter full of grandeur and brilliancy; worthy, both as it respects the form and the subject

of being addressed by Jehovah himself to celestial intelligences, prostrate before his throne. We do not reflect, however, that this Word of God, to be of any use, must pass into the hands of men; must be understood by them; must render the divine counsels familiar to them. In a word, we require from the Old Testament the absolute perfection of its author, without that relative perfection which was consistent with its object. This is the error to which I referred, p. 34, and which I would endeavour to correct here.

Let us now try to gain an exact idea of the nature and consequences of this mistake; and distinguish, for the purpose of separate examination, those three erroneous views, of which it appears to me to be formed.

I. We wish to discover, in the Old Testament, a revelation addressed to the whole earth—intended for the whole race of man; whilst it contains, principally,

a special religion, given to a single people, with a particular and temporary object: in a word—a *revealed law*. The Old Testament, consequently, must be studied, understood, and judged of, in connection with the nation and the object to which I have alluded. Doubtless, this book was also designed to communicate useful lessons to the whole human race—doubtless, being intended to conduct them to Jesus Christ, and to be fulfilled by him alone: it contained the germ of the Saviour's universal religion. Were it only from its connection with that religion, it is of the first importance to Christians; but it is not the less true, that its immediate design was to produce a determinate effect upon men of a certain age and a certain country: and this has not been sufficiently considered. This truth accords with the successive form in which God gave the ancient law to his people. Let it not be forgotten that

God spake to the ancestors of Christ in divers manners, and at sundry times. And *sundry times* required different things, supposed different men, and rendered *divers manners* necessary. All these partial revelations had each, first, an immediate object in view, relative to the time and the place; then, that more comprehensive, but still restricted object, which is common to the whole of the Old Testament: they were, then, all to have reference to the universal, the last revelation, to which they were preliminary. It is easy to see, that in reading the books of the Old Covenant in this way, it explains and illustrates them. The Pentateuch was designed to found a System of Law, and to form the Hebrew people; the historical books, to preserve the remembrance of divine mercies and commands, and to instruct the Israelites, by the record of the divine judgments on their fathers; the prophecies, to awaken a slumbering

piety—to recal the people to the station in which God had placed them among the nations of the earth; the didactic and moral books, to deduce, to amplify, to generalize the truths, which formed the prevailing character of the Hebrew religion—to bring them home to their minds, to show their application to themselves. Thus, all these books were immediately addressed to the Hebrews, and relate, especially, to their instruction and improvement. This principle once adopted, the particular difficulties by which the Christian reader is embarrassed, disappear with the error into which he had fallen.

Perhaps he was surprised at the want of method observable in the form of a book, which was presented to him as a religious code, and in which he discovers no systematic order—no clear and succinct plan. He now understands that God chose a successive order—the order of time; because it was the only way in

which his purpose could be accomplished, by giving each generation precisely the lesson which it required; by producing, at every given time, the partial effect intended by the general system of the revelation.

Perhaps he was astonished at finding in the Old Law, so many things which he is unable to apply to himself; so many precepts which he cannot obey; so many lessons not adapted to the measure of his understanding. He now sees that this law was particularly designed for another people—another climate—another age; that the avowed object of its author regarded these; and that it must be judged of, only in respect to the manner in which this object was attained.

Perhaps, again, he was troubled at finding many details, expressions, and narratives, which were not in accordance with those pure and noble sentiments which his imagination ascribed to the thoughts and lessons of the Deity. This

objection now no longer exists. It is useless to repeat what I have said on this subject, pp. 35—37. I will only remark, that we find here the necessary consequences of the principle which I have just laid down, and of that which I am going to establish.*

* This is a proper place to correct a mistake, which is frequently made, with regard to the narratives of the Old Testament.

In acknowledging the historical books of the Jews to be sacred, Christians do not pretend to regard, as praiseworthy or excusable, all the circumstances which they relate, and on which the Hebrews of that day were not able to judge correctly; but those only which are expressly praised by the writers. Besides, these facts are often described as worthy of approbation, only in part, or in connection with the design, the time, the place, the necessity, the special object of the Jewish religion, the selection of the people whom they concerned, or their rudeness. This appears so clear, that it may be thought superfluous to add this note. Unhappily, it is not superfluous; as is clearly proved by the different attacks of which the old revelation is still the object.

II. In the second place, it seems to be imagined, that the morality of the Old Testament should be absolutely perfect, and its instructions of a mathematically philosophical precision. It may be asked, first of all, whether, if it had been so, the Hebrews would have understood it and obeyed it. The Old Testament, in fact, was designed to form them, and to instruct them, and not to give to mankind an all-perfect record of the divine purposes and perfections. God is not an artificer, who needs to make himself known by a useless masterpiece: but in the Old Testament, if I may venture to use this figure, he appears like an ingenious mechanist; who, with a specific object in view, forms a machine which is most adapted for his purpose, but who is not desirous of adding complicated and useless ornaments, or observing a symmetry, which might be injurious rather than otherwise.

To employ an image more near the

truth, and less unworthy of the Most High. When God determined on revealing himself to man,—not for the purpose of dazzling him by the display of his glory, or of manifesting that ineffable grandeur which created beings could never comprehend, but in pity and in love, for the salvation and happiness of his creatures,—could he do otherwise than imitate the enlightened and tender father, who kindly developes the imperfect ideas of his child, and puts himself on a level with his capacity? Take the greatest philosopher, the most distinguished scholar in the world. Mark how he instructs the child who owes him life, and for whose future interest he is so deeply concerned. You do not perceive the superiority of his genius, unless it be in the extreme simplicity of his expressions; in his anxiety to sacrifice precision to clearness; in the skilful choice of what the child can

comprehend, and of a task which he can accomplish. Such is God, when addressing man. And what man would comprehend his revelation, if it unfolded the truth in its majestic extent? What zeal would not be alarmed, if he imposed on us that perfect excellence which he himself contemplates? Still further; since God employs human forms to make himself known to men, it is evident that he accommodates this revelation to their weakness; for where would mortal tongues find words, in accordance with that superior and perfect order of things?

This will be still better understood, if it be asked,—Of what the majority of that race are composed, to whom revelation addresses itself? It is formed of the lower class; and this portion of the community is not only the most numerous, but is also the most wretched, ignorant, and debased: and, consequently, they

most need divine aid;* or, at least, their claims to it are most urgent. This proves clearly that it was necessary that revelation, in preserving sufficient sublimity to excite the admiration of the most exalted minds—sufficient depth, to furnish constant and new subjects for meditation, should, however, be adapted to the capacities of the greatest number. Without this, it would have become, as our social distinctions often become,

* I hope I shall not be mistaken in what I here say. God forbid that I should regard revelation as superfluous to any one, were he even the first philosopher in the world. I think, on the contrary, that he who feels the want of it more keenly than another, will be that man whose mind is most active and comprehensive. But I suppose it will be granted, that the Deity had done more for Socrates and Plato, than for the porters of the Piræus, or the Helots of Lacedæmonia; and that these wretched victims of social organization seem, by their ignorance, their misfortune, their vices, and their numbers, to merit more compassion from our Father, who is in heaven.

a new privilege, reserved for those who are already privileged: and Jesus Christ gave thanks to his Father, that he had chosen rather to reveal himself to *babes*.

These principles are indisputable; but how much more evident will they appear, if, instead of speaking of revelation in general, we apply them to the Old Law in particular.

The Old Testament addressed itself to Jews—a people scarcely civilized, and extremely devoid of docility and intelligence. This nation, moreover, in consequence of the very object which the Deity contemplated in its formation, was not designed for progressive advances in civilization—it was intended to be almost stationary. The Mosaic law did not urge it upon them to advance, nor inspired them with holy ardour; on the contrary, it rendered them fixed and unchangeable, and transformed them, like the wife of Lot, into a motionless and durable statue.

We must not, therefore, be surprised, if the lessons and maxims which the Hebrews received, are sometimes below the level to which Christianity has raised us; if polygamy, divorce, vengeance, and slavery, are tolerated amongst a stiff-necked and hard-hearted race; if Moses, in unfolding to them a really correct and philosophical idea of the divine attributes, encompasses this fine idea with glowing, but necessarily imperfect imagery; if he places the throne of Jehovah in the midst of a brilliant flame, or a dazzling light; if he promises that the Lord shall go before the Israelites, or if he threatens only to send his angel. Was it possible for him, in a moment, to make six hundred thousand philosophers of these six hundred thousand shepherds, who had just escaped from slavery? No; it is not in the sublime idea of perfect truth and virtue, which ill accords with the infirmity of human nature, and which

is useless to imperfect and finite beings, that we must seek and recognize divine inspiration: this will be found, rather, in an indispensable condescension to our faculties and understanding. What will always distinguish the divine character of this condescension, is this, that it will never have a tendency to debase our faith, to cause our understanding to retrograde, or to sully virtue; but, on the contrary, to advance the progress of all three.*

III. Lastly. Inspiration is often represented as causing holy men to undergo a complete transformation; as not only removing their errors, but changing, also, their habits and their character, and substituting the sole and omnipotent action of the Holy Spirit, for all their former ideas and attainments. We are, then, astonished that an inspiration of this

* See also what I have said on this subject, chapter ix. pp. 229—232.

nature should occasionally display, in the Old Testament, traces of the tastes, of the education, of the imperfect knowledge, and of the prejudices of the writers. But the objection which is hence derived against this book is of no weight, because it rests on a false principle.

All Scripture is given by inspiration. Itself declares this; but it also declares, if not in terms, yet it is proved in every page, that this divine inspiration did not produce those effects which men have been pleased to imagine. It undoubtedly corrected the ideas of the sacred writer; it directed his actions; it refined his knowledge; it enlarged his powers of mind; but it acted in different degrees, according to the individuals concerned, their age, and their office. It always left the object of these glorious privileges more or less to the effects of his own exertions, his own education, his own moral and intellectual habits. In a word, inspiration developed his powers of mind,

without changing them. To show how this truth is deduced from every part of Scripture; how it is evident in every page; proved by the reasonings and the tone of every writer; by the form and style of every book, would require more space than we can devote in this work to so interesting an enquiry. I entreat my readers, then, to admit this doctrine as a proposition, which it will be very easy for them to demonstrate. In order to do this, all that is necessary is, to read the Bible, and to read it with this object in view; to bring to the examination good sense and perfect honesty.*

In the meanwhile, let us observe how effectually this way of considering divine inspiration dissipates the clouds which

* I have illustrated this idea, somewhat more at large, in my *Essai d'une introduction critique au nouveau Testament*, pp. 394—401. See, on the subject of the proofs of this truth, some remarkable theses, published at Geneva, in 1824, by M. A. M., *Sur la nature de l'inspiration des apôtres*.

overshadowed the sacred code. We shall sometimes meet in it (in unimportant matters) with incomplete narratives; with explanations devoid of method; traces of the opinions of the age; and slight historical contradictions. But all this is explained by the particular habits of each writer, or by the original source of his knowledge; and this neither contradicts nor weakens inspiration, when it reserves all its strength for that which tends, in the most direct way, to inculcate faith. Joshua may believe that the earth is stationary; or the Psalmist, that the eagle, when it has lived a hundred years, renews its youth: this is of no moment. Joshua is not the less convinced that his voice has wrought a miracle; and the mercy which David extols is not less certain. This point of view once established, we are not surprised at beholding each of the sacred writers with a style and character peculiar to himself. Isaiah is distinguished from Ezekiel—David

from Moses, even when they write on similar subjects. Each exhibits marks of his own habits, and of the age in which he lived. But in vain do they appear different, independent, and original, when the subject of their writings is such as tends to enlighten and sanctify men, to guide or establish the people; they then aim really at the same object: and the difference of their points of view only leads them, at once, to the attainment of the same end, though by different roads. If the Deity, who directs them, wishes to employ them as agents, rather than act in their place, I perceive that, always consistent with himself, he follows, even with regard to inspiration, the mode which he has pointed out for the operations of grace and nature; but I perceive his work no less clearly. I discover a supernatural direction with so much the greater ease; because the imperfection of these writers, their incapacity, the limits of their own conceptions,

are a contrast with the divine truths which they are, however, commissioned to make known.

If my readers have understood me, they will be able, themselves, to apply the principles of these three sections to particular objections.

CHAPTER XI.**THE DIVINE PLAN MANIFESTED IN THE
CONSTITUTION AND HISTORY OF
THE JEWISH PEOPLE.**

In page 38, I have said that the Old Testament was the result of a vast and remarkable plan, by which God designed to make a deep impression on the Hebrews. In the preceding chapter I have supposed the existence of it, without demonstrating it. Perhaps I may be expected to unfold my views upon this subject before I conclude: but most of these have been stated in the preceding chapters—and others would be out of place here. I shall, therefore, confine myself to exhibiting, in the first place, without illustrations or proofs, the principal features under which this plan appears to present itself. I

shall afterwards point out the importance which it gives to some of the laws, which, at first sight, appear most minute: perhaps even to those which lead a certain class of readers to regard the Old Testament with contempt.

I. God designed the Jewish people to prepare the advent of the Messiah, and the triumph of his doctrine. With this object in view, they were to preserve,—together with the Sacred Oracles and the expectation of the Messiah,—the knowledge of the unity of God: a holy truth, unknown to the rest of the world, till the moment arrived when the universal religion of Jesus should be diffused throughout the world, as the waters cover the channels of the deep.

That the Jewish people might accomplish this object, God had made them the descendants of a single individual; placed them in a country favoured of Heaven; surrounded it with the natural barriers of rivers, seas, and mountains,—

by means of which, as in a lofty fortress, they might forget the other nations of the world, having nothing either to hope or fear from them.

This was not all. God deeply implanted the Jewish people in this new soil: he changed them from wandering shepherds into laborious husbandmen. By a combination of laws, as new as they are ingenious, he provided against too great an inequality in their fortunes: he provided, that in all ages, every Hebrew should have a portion of land, to ensure his independence; civil rights, to secure his liberty; and a legal posterity, to preserve his name in the public archives. In a word, he attached the Israelites to the soil and to the climate, to the peace and prosperity of their new country, by almost infinite and indissoluble ties, though they were often refined and imperceptible.

With the same object in view, God subjected the Hebrews to a mild and

fostering government, which decreed the rights and happiness of all. They were in subjection to military leaders, whose powerful authority was only temporary: to civil judges, whose age, and whose appointment by the nation, were a guarantee for the equitable discharge of their duty; whose paternal judgments were public; and before whom the accused often found securities against injustice, which were unknown to Eastern nations, and, too often, even to those of civilized Europe. They were, moreover, in subjection to ecclesiastical governors; who, being so situated as not to have the power of abusing their authority, exercised over them a happy and powerful influence, which they derived from their superior knowledge, their easy circumstances, and their rank. The union of the tribes,—social relations,—the happiness of domestic life, were protected by effective and vigorous institutions. Even the joyous festivals were made,

by the legislator, in his wisdom and benevolence, the instruments of patriotism and peace.

Happy in themselves, the Hebrews were almost separated, externally, from all foreign nations. They were superior in religious knowledge, and in moral advantages, to the shamefully idolatrous nations by which they were surrounded: on the other hand, they were inferior to them in that nominal civilization, and in those corrupting arts, which, when unaccompanied by virtue, render a people depraved, instead of enlightened. On all accounts, therefore, they would have been losers, by taking their level among the nations of the East: their manners, as well as their worship, made it necessary that they should remain an isolated people. It was the design of the legislator that, above all things, they should be faithful to their God; and that they should preserve their virtue unsullied. He gave them a special and separate

existence: he denied them commerce and manufactures, and even the knowledge of the arts and sciences: he left them agriculture alone,—a beneficent and salutary employment, the source of simple manners, of manly virtues, and of solid prosperity.

But the legislator did not forbid all progress in civilization. He even favoured that which was not incompatible with the object contemplated in the formation of this people. First, in watching over their manners; in anxiously blocking up all the inroads by which idolatry might assail them; in setting before their eyes, and placing in their hands, the most profound, and, at the same time, the most simple books, with which the world, prior to Jesus, were acquainted, he really secured to them, together with the possession of the first great truth, and habits of piety, justice, and virtue, the true sources of wisdom and prosperity. But he did still more. He developed and

augmented the principles of an infant civilization; not by means of knowledge, but of mild and generous affections. He preserved and cherished the smallest seeds of mercy and of kindness: and not permitted to make his people enlightened, he wished, at least, to make them humane and benevolent.

Happy Israel! if thy disobedience had not perverted the plan of the divine legislator, and facilitated the introduction of idolatry. The culpable negligence of the people very soon rendered new arrangements necessary; in order that, till the coming of the Messiah, they might retain possession of the promises and of the truth.

The Lord continued to watch over their destiny, and in order to repair the injury which they had done, and to prevent that which they might do to themselves, he endeavoured to affect their vain imaginations by a variety of scenes and spectacles; he alternately encouraged and

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their tottering steps, and falling prostrate on the ground. At length dissolved into their elements, and scattered over the world, they still struggle, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, because their God is no longer with them.*

Such, as it appears to me, is the object and the plan of the divine legislator, which the Old Testament records. In the second place we may point out the way in which this plan often explains

* It can hardly be necessary for me to say, that I speak here of the Jews only as a political body; and that I am far from wishing to attack the moral character, or the intellectual powers, of this people. I know much to respect in the conduct, and in the knowledge, of many among them. As a man, I acknowledge the services which some have rendered to literature, to the cause of education, and benevolence. As a disciple of Christ, I advert to the absurd oppression of which the Jews have been the subjects, only to protest, in the name of the gospel, against this inhumanity, which is as unjust, as it is foreign to the spirit of Christ.

certain obscure or minute laws. As it is not possible to treat this copious subject at large, I shall select some instances.

II. The legislator was particularly desirous of attaching the Hebrews to agriculture, and, through it, to Palestine; to prevent them from ever returning to Egypt, and to the life of wandering shepherds. For this purpose, he allowed the Hebrews the use of wine, which was unknown to the Egyptians and the Arabians: he required it in their sacrifices: he made it necessary to their worship; and he was well aware, that the habit, once acquired, would never be lost. In the same manner, and with the same object in view, he prohibited the use of fat, under the pretext of its being required for burnt-offerings; and the use of butter, also, in the preparation of certain kinds of food.* He substituted

* No doubt this was the object of the celebrated law, which prohibited the seething of a kid in its mother's milk, and which we find repeated three

for these, at their festivals, the juice of the olive; and this, likewise, was required in their sacrifices. By these means, so simple, and, apparently, so trifling, and by others of a similar nature, he for ever made a colony of wandering shepherds into a nation of able and active agriculturists.

It was an object with the legislator to circumscribe the aspiring power of the priests: at the same time he was desirous that their rank should be an honourable one; their existence easy; and that they should possess a certain degree of influence on society. How does he accomplish this object? He requires, from the fertile lands of the Hebrews, numerous contributions; which, under the name of tythes, first fruits, and offerings, filled the store-houses of the

times in the Pentateuch. The poetical and sententious form of the law, seems designed for the purpose of fixing the precept more firmly in the memory, by giving it more solemnity.

temple, and enabled those who were devoted to the altar to live by the altar. He enriched them with extensive revenues; and placed them in the station which the ministers of Israel's King and God should, of right, occupy. Let us not, however, be mistaken. It was not his object to show any preference for those, whose privilege it was to live beneath the shadow of the tabernacle; nor to sacrifice to them the interests of those industrious husbandmen, who bore the heat and burden of the day. To the former he gave dwellings, without a patrimony. He refused them, what he granted the other tribes,—the exclusive property of the country. He gave them neither lands nor capital: he did not give them even the allotment of land, which he secured so carefully to the lowest of the Israelites. By combining these two laws, he prevented an *esprit de corps* among the priests:—ambitious projects; accumulated wealth; and all

those abuses, which are common to a powerful priesthood. He made the Levites dependent upon the nation, to which they looked for an annual supply of food; and whose approbation and regard, consequently, it was their interest to merit. Moreover, notwithstanding the concentration of divine worship in a single city, and a single sanctuary, he dispersed them throughout all the land; and this beneficial dispersion,—prescribed by the law in express terms, and so necessary for the proper gathering of the tythes,—was advantageous in strengthening the bonds of the political confederacy; in establishing and superintending the manners, the good order, and piety of the people. It, besides, attached the Levites to the nation. It prevented them from associating too closely among themselves, and from uniting to a community of duties and of caste—a community of habits, of remembrances, and of country. An admirable law, which, for the hap-

piness of all, united policy and justice with so much address!

The isolated condition of the people, and their separation from strangers, are, we have already said, one of the great springs of the law. Ceremonial purity was designed to effect this object, in an indirect, but certain way. Subjected to this complication of troublesome laws, which, at all times, required him to scrutinize his food, his clothing, and his steps, the Israelite was compelled to shun all intercourse with those who were not acquainted with these restrictions; and any connection with whom would have polluted him, and exposed him to fresh privations. Had there been nothing else, this law would have created for him, in the end, new habits and wants, and given him, as it were, an artificial and imperious nature, which would have exposed him to perpetual uneasiness among strangers. Never would the Jew seek his fortune in a distant land, while,

in his own country, he found both peace and plenty.

The absence of all idolatry, was of great moment to the permanence of the Mosaic dispensation. This is the subject to which the legislator devotes his chief efforts. But it was not by direct and terrible laws only, that he endeavoured to avert this evil: it was, also, by indirect means—by particular precautions. It was by compelling the Hebrews, by the minute observances of the ceremonial law, constantly to keep their attention fixed on the obligations of worship, and their minds impressed by the presence of God. It was, also, by prohibiting them from many customs, which were, in themselves, indifferent; but which were connected, amongst neighbouring nations, with idolatry, and which, consequently, would have soon led them into it also. Why was the prohibition, concerning the blood of animals, so severe, so carefully expressed, and repeated seven times?

Because that, independently of a regard to health and humanity—which has often been assigned as the reason—this usage would facilitate or introduce an idolatrous imitation of the Phœnicians; among whom as well as among other nations also, the worshippers of false gods, in their sacred ceremonies drank the blood of the victim. Why does the book of Leviticus peremptorily forbid the describing certain figures on the body, and certain modes of arranging the beard and cutting the hair? Because they were Arab customs, adopted in honour of idols. It would be easy to point out other examples of the same kind.

In order to obtain a reception, and respect, for his new religion, the legislator was obliged, sometimes, to choose religious forms, with which the Hebrews had already become familiar in Egypt. But, then, how does he secure them from idolatry? The whole of the religion

of Egypt was deeply imbued with it; and the people of Moses were but too much inclined to it. Precautions, not very apparent, and ingenious alterations, obviated this danger. Moses borrowed from the Egyptians the sacred ornament which sparkled on the breast of the high priest; but instead of a figure of truth, represented under a human form, it was a metaphysical symbol of the divine power, called *Light and Perfection*;^{*} and this sparkling symbol bore only the names of the twelve tribes. From the same source, also, Moses borrowed a sacred tabernacle, which was accessible to the priests alone; but instead of placing it, as was usual, in the direction of the rising sun, he placed its front towards the west, and intercepted, from the view of the worshippers, the first rays of the splendid divinity of the East. Moses also borrowed the mysterious ark,

* This is the meaning of the words *Urim* and *Thummin* (Exod. xxviii. 30.)

which stood in the sanctuaries of Egypt; but instead of a material symbol of the divine power,—a symbol which would very soon have introduced idolatrous worship,—this ark contained only the tables of the law. We must pause in the enumeration of these examples, and in the developement of this subject. The detail would become wearisome, without being ever completed.

Thus, the more we examine the Pentateuch, the more real, though often concealed, wisdom do we find, even in the slightest particulars: the more are we, also, compelled to admire the wise and beneficent design of the lawgiver of Israel. This may teach us—and let us ever remember it—not rashly to judge of the obscurities which may yet remain. Are we acquainted with the manners, the idioms, the monuments of all the people by whom Moses was surrounded? If we are not, are we capable of adequately appreciating his plans? If,

in what he has done, we discover so many elevated views—such profound combinations; if the little that we do know of these remains of high antiquity, in the ages of which he lived, leads us to ascribe glory to the work of the Jewish lawgiver, is it not a duty to him, to judge of what we are less acquainted with from that with which we are better acquainted? Doubtless, we want but to understand every part of his institution, in order to admire it all.

Let me be allowed here to transcribe, as a conclusion to this work, some striking remarks; of which, the principal idea is altogether similar to the object which I have proposed to myself in this treatise.

“Unquestionably,” says M. B. Constant, in concluding his reflections on the Hebrew law,* “unquestionably, the

* Vol. ii. pp. 249—251. My readers will, I hope, pardon me, for introducing another passage from a book which I have often quoted. I know

Jewish religion is terrible in some of its parts; and in wading through its long annals, we tread upon blood-stained ruins. However, the world is under vast obligations to Moses. When destitute of all faith; distracted by doubt; depraved by pollution, the whole earth sought for the true worship . . . that of the Jews served as a standard; and man was seen to be born again, as it were, to all that was noble and valuable in life, in being regenerated by religion. Wonderful dispensation of the power which decides our destinies! Some things, which appear to have no connection with each other, either in their age not how to resist the temptation of repeating the tribute offered, by such a writer as M. B. Constant, to Moses and to his work. It is pleasing to find our own ideas in the writings of our opponents; when, at least, we have to do with adversaries like him. I have ventured to oppose him; but it was in a good cause. Nevertheless, his book is not one which it is possible to read without admiration, or to attack without regret.

or in their nature, combine, at the proper time, to direct the human race towards the object which they sought. Twelve centuries before Plato, Moses gave a substantiality to theism, which preserved this sublime doctrine to the time when the human understanding became capable of receiving it. Twelve centuries after Moses, Plato so prepared the mind, that in embracing theism, men were able to receive it, purified by the divine author of the Christian religion; and to resist the violent and obstinate efforts of a numerous portion of the Jewish converts, who aimed at carrying back the new religion to Judaism. Without Moses, it is probable that all the efforts of philosophy would scarcely have prevented the human race from plunging into pantheism or concealed atheism; in which, as I have already said in the beginning of this chapter, the religion and philosophy of the Indians were alike lost. Without Plato, it is possible, humanly

speaking, that Christianity, under the oppression of Judaizing Christians, would have again become a Jewish sect."

Let those, then, who are elevated and affected by the thought that they are Christians, know what obligations they are under to the Old Law, which was designed to prepare *a peculiar people* for Christ. Far from ignorantly and rashly judging of this ancient, this venerable book,—among the obscurities of which we evidently discover sublime truths, incalculable benefits, and the intervention of God himself,—let us learn to revere that Moses, to whom Jews and Christians, and the world at large, are so deeply indebted; and those other divine messengers, who, for more than eleven centuries followed in his steps, to complete his work; and that sacred volume, which is the venerable record of their mission—the first charter of salvation granted to the sinful and unhappy race of man. Above all, let us learn to bless

and gratefully extol that God, *who,*
having *in times past spoken to our fathers,*
at sundry times and in divers manners, by
the prophets, has completed his work
of mercy *by, at last, speaking to us*
by his Son.

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